

For Six Month Period Ending August 31, 2007
(Insert date)

I - REGISTRANT

1. (a) Name of Registrant

Venezuela Information Office, LLC

(b) Registration No.

5609

(c) Business Address(es) of Registrant

2000 P Street, NW Suite 240
Washington DC 20036

2. Has there been a change in the information previously furnished in connection with the following:

(a) If an individual:

(1) Residence address

Yes ☐

No ☐

(2) Citizenship

Yes ☐

No ☐

(3) Occupation

Yes ☐

No ☐

(b) If an organization:

(1) Name

Yes ☐

No ☒

(2) Ownership or control

Yes ☐

No ☒

(3) Branch offices

Yes ☐

No ☒

(c) Explain fully all changes, if any, indicated in items (a) and (b) above.

2007 SEP 20 PM 4: 22
CRM/REGISTRATION UNIT

IF THE REGISTRANT IS AN INDIVIDUAL, OMIT RESPONSE TO ITEMS 3, 4 AND 5(a).

3. If you have previously filed Exhibit C¹, state whether any changes therein have occurred during this 6 month reporting period.

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, have you filed an amendment to the Exhibit C?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If no, please attach the required amendment.

N/A

¹ The Exhibit C, for which no printed form is provided, consists of a true copy of the charter, articles of incorporation, association, and by laws of a registrant that is an organization. (A waiver of the requirement to file an Exhibit C may be obtained for good cause upon written application to the Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530.)

4. (a) Have any persons ceased acting as partners, officers, directors or similar officials of the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

| Name | Position | Date connection ended |
|------|----------|-----------------------|
|------|----------|-----------------------|

- (b) Have any persons become partners, officers, directors or similar officials during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

| Name | Residence address | Citizenship | Position | Date assumed |
|------|-------------------|-------------|----------|--------------|
|------|-------------------|-------------|----------|--------------|

5. (a) Has any person named in item 4(b) rendered services directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, identify each such person and describe his service.

- (b) Have any employees or individuals, who have filed a short form registration statement, terminated their employment or connection with the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, furnish the following information:

| Name | Position or connection | Date terminated |
|------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Paul Beich | media analyst | Mar. 15, 2007 |

- (c) During this 6 month reporting period, has the registrant hired as employees or in any other capacity, any persons who rendered or will render services to the registrant directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal(s) in other than a clerical or secretarial, or in a related or similar capacity? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, furnish the following information:

| Name | Residence address | Citizenship | Position | Date assumed |
|-----------------|---|-------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Megan Morrissey | 1751 Harvard St. NW | U.S. | media analyst & researcher | Mar. 21, 2007 |
| Alex Main | Apt. 5-B Samanes Plaza Ave Los Samanes, Caracas | Venezuela | researcher & policy analyst | April 24, 2007 |

6. Have short form registration statements been filed by all of the persons named in items 5(a) and 5(c) of the supplemental statement? Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, list names of persons who have not filed the required statement.

II - FOREIGN PRINCIPAL

7. Has your connection with any foreign principal ended during this 6 month reporting period?
 Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name of foreign principal

Date of termination

8. Have you acquired any new foreign principal² during this 6 month reporting period?
 Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name and address of foreign principal

Date acquired

9. In addition to those named in Items 7 and 8, if any, list foreign principals² whom you continued to represent during the 6 month reporting period.

Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

10. EXHIBITS A AND B

- (a) Have you filed for each of the newly acquired foreign principals in Item 8 the following:

Exhibit A³
 Exhibit B⁴

Yes ☐ No ☐
 Yes ☐ No ☐

N/A

If no, please attach the required exhibit.

- (b) Have there been any changes in the Exhibits A and B previously filed for any foreign principal whom you represented during the 6 month period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, have you filed an amendment to these exhibits?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please attach the required amendment.

² The term "foreign principal" includes, in addition to those defined in Section 1(b) of the Act, an individual organization any of whose activities are directly or indirectly supervised, directed, controlled, financed, or subsidized in whole or in major part by a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign organization or foreign individual. (See Rule 100(a)(9).) A registrant who represents more than one foreign principal is required to list in the statements he files under the Act only those principals for whom he is not entitled to claim exemption under Section 3 of the Act. (See Rule 208.)

³ The Exhibit A, which is filed on Form CRM-157 (Formerly OBD-67), sets forth the information required to be disclosed concerning each foreign principal.

⁴ The Exhibit B, which is filed on Form CRM-155 (Formerly OBD-65), sets forth the information concerning the agreement or understanding between the registrant and the foreign principal.

III - ACTIVITIES

11. During this 6 month reporting period, have you engaged in any activities for or rendered any services to any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail your activities and services:

Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

All activities were of a political nature and are described in response to item 12 of section III.
(see attachment)

12. During this 6 month reporting period, have you on behalf of any foreign principal engaged in political activity⁵ as defined below? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail all such political activity, indicating, among other things, the relations, interests and policies sought to be influenced and the means employed to achieve this purpose. If the registrant arranged, sponsored or delivered speeches, lectures or radio and TV broadcasts, give details as to dates and places of delivery, names of speakers and subject matter.

(see log attachment)

13. In addition to the above described activities, if any, have you engaged in activity on your own behalf which benefits any or all of your foreign principals? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, describe fully.

⁵ The term "political activities" means any activity that the person engaging in believes will, or that the person intends to, in any way influence any agency or official of the Government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to formulating, adopting or changing the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to the political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party.

IV - FINANCIAL INFORMATION

14. (a) RECEIPTS - MONIES

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal, any contributions, income or money either as compensation or otherwise? Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, explain why.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies⁶

| Date | From whom | Purpose | Amount |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| | Venezuelan Embassy | Operating Expenses | \$ |
| 4/30/07 | " | " | \$ 275,000 |
| 4/30/07 | " | " | \$ 290,000 |
| 7/12/07 | " | " | \$ 190,000 |
| | | | <u>\$ 755,000</u> |
| | | | Total |

(b) RECEIPTS - FUND RAISING CAMPAIGN

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received, as part of a fund raising campaign⁷, any money on behalf of any foreign principal named in items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, have you filed an Exhibit D⁸ to your registration? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, indicate the date the Exhibit D was filed. Date _____

(c) RECEIPTS - THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received any thing of value⁹ other than money from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

| Name of foreign principal | Date received | Description of thing of value | Purpose |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------|
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------|

^{6, 7} A registrant is required to file an Exhibit D if he collects or receives contributions, loans, money, or other things of value for a foreign principal, as part of a fund raising campaign. (See Rule 201(e).)

⁸ An Exhibit D, for which no printed form is provided, sets forth an account of money collected or received as a result of a fund raising campaign and transmitted for a foreign principal.

⁹ Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks," and the like.

15. (a) DISBURSEMENTS - MONIES

During this 6 month reporting period, have you

(1) disbursed or expended monies in connection with activity on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes ☒ No ☐(2) transmitted monies to any such foreign principal? Yes ☐ No ☒

If no, explain in full detail why there were no disbursements made on behalf of any foreign principal.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies, including monies transmitted, if any, to each foreign principal.

| Date | To whom | Purpose | Amount |
|------|---------|---------|--------|
|------|---------|---------|--------|

(see attachment 15 a)

Total

(b) DISBURSEMENTS - THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you disposed of anything of value¹⁰ other than money in furtherance of or in connection with activities on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement?

Yes ☐No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

| Date disposed | Name of person to whom given | On behalf of what foreign principal | Description of thing of value | Purpose |
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|

(c) DISBURSEMENTS - POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

During this 6 month reporting period, have you from your own funds and on your own behalf either directly or through any other person, made any contributions of money or other things of value¹¹ in connection with an election to any political office, or in connection with any primary election, convention, or caucus held to select candidates for political office?

Yes ☐No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

| Date | Amount or thing of value | Name of political organization | Name of candidate |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
|------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|

10. 11 Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks" and the like.

V - INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

16. During this 6 month reporting period, did you prepare, disseminate or cause to be disseminated any informational materials ^{12?}
 Yes ☒ No ☐

IF YES, RESPOND TO THE REMAINING ITEMS IN SECTION V.

17. Identify each such foreign principal.

Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

18. During this 6 month reporting period, has any foreign principal established a budget or allocated a specified sum of money to finance your activities in preparing or disseminating informational materials? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal, specify amount, and indicate for what period of time.

Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Amount \$ 755,000

Period March 1, 2007 - August 31, 2007.

19. During this 6 month reporting period, did your activities in preparing, disseminating or causing the dissemination of informational materials include the use of any of the following:

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Radio or TV. broadcasts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Magazine or newspaper articles | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion picture films | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letters or telegrams |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advertising campaigns | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Press releases | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamphlets or other publications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lectures or speeches |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ | | |

20. During this 6 month reporting period, did you disseminate or cause to be disseminated informational materials among any of the following groups:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Officials | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers | <input type="checkbox"/> Libraries |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legislators | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Editors | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational institutions |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government agencies | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civic groups or associations | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nationality groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ | | |

21. What language was used in the informational materials:

☒ English ☒ Other (specify) spanish

22. Did you file with the Registration Unit, U.S. Department of Justice a copy of each item of such informational materials disseminated or caused to be disseminated during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☐

23. Did you label each item of such informational materials with the statement required by Section 4(b) of the Act? Yes ☒ No ☐

¹² The term informational materials includes any oral, visual, graphic, written, or pictorial information or matter of any kind, including that published by means of advertising, books, periodicals, newspapers, lectures, broadcasts, motion pictures, or any means or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce or otherwise. Informational materials disseminated by an agent of a foreign principal as part of an activity in itself exempt from registration, or an activity which by itself would not require registration, need not be filed pursuant to Section 4(b) of the Act.

VI - EXECUTION

In accordance with 28 U.S.C. §1746, the undersigned swear(s) or affirm(s) under penalty of perjury that he/she has (they have) read the information set forth in this registration statement and the attached exhibits and that he/she is (they are) familiar with the contents thereof and that such contents are in their entirety true and accurate to the best of his/her (their) knowledge and belief, except that the undersigned make(s) no representation as to the truth or accuracy of the information contained in the attached Short Form Registration Statement(s), if any, insofar as such information is not within his/her (their) personal knowledge.

(Date of signature)

9/18/07

(Type or print name under each signature¹³)Olivia B. Goumbri
Olivia B. Goumbri2007 SEP 20 PM 4:22
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¹³ This statement shall be signed by the individual agent, if the registrant is an individual or by a majority of those partners, officers, directors or persons performing similar functions, if the registrant is an organization, except that the organization can, by power of attorney, authorize one or more individuals to execute this statement on its behalf.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FARA REGISTRATION UNIT
NATIONAL SECURITY DIVISION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20530

NOTICE

Please answer the following questions and return this sheet in triplicate with your Supplemental Statement:

1. Is your answer to Item 16 of Section V (Informational Materials – page 8 of Form CRM-154, formerly Form OBD-64-Supplemental Statement):

YES X or NO _____

(If your answer to question 1 is "yes" do not answer question 2 of this form.)

2. Do you disseminate any material in connection with your registration:

YES _____ or NO _____

(If your answer to question 2 is "yes" please forward for our review copies of all material including: films, film catalogs, posters, brochures, press releases, etc. which you have disseminated during the past six months.)

Olivia B. Goumbri 9/18/07
Signature Date

Olivia B. Goumbri

Please type or print name of
Signatory on the line above

Executive Director
Title

2007 SEP 20 PM 4:22
CRM/ISS/REGISTRATION UNIT



U.S. Department of Justice

Criminal Division

Washington, DC 20530

THIS FORM IS TO BE AN OFFICIAL ATTACHMENT TO YOUR CURRENT SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT
PLEASE EXECUTE IN TRIPLICATE

SHORT-FORM REGISTRATION INFORMATION SHEET

SECTION A

The Department records list active short-form registration statements for the following persons of your organization filed on the date indicated by each name. If a person is not still functioning in the same capacity directly on behalf of the foreign principal, please show the date of termination.

2007 SEP 20 PM 4:23
CRIMINALS/REGISTRATION UNIT

Short Form List for Registrant: Venezuela Information Office, LLC

| Last Name | First Name and Other Names | Registration Date | Termination Date | Role |
|-----------|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Gilmond | Isaura | 03/18/2004 | | |
| Goumbri | Olivia B. | 11/22/2005 | | |
| Fani | Natali d. | 01/10/2007 | | |
| Beich III | Paul Marion | 01/18/2007 | 03/15/07 | Media Analyst |
| Morrissey | Megan D. | 03/21/2007 | | |
| Main | Alexander John | 04/24/2007 | | |



U.S. Department of Justice

National Security Division

Washington, DC 20530

SECTION B

In addition to those persons listed in Section A, list below all current employees rendering services directly on behalf of the foreign principals(s) who have not filed short-form registration statements. (Do not list clerks, secretaries, typists or employees in a similar or related capacity). If there is some question as to whether an employee has an obligation to file a short-form, please address a letter to the Registration Unit describing the activities and connection with the foreign principal.

| Name | Function | Date Hired |
|------|----------|------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Signature: Alina B. Gornii Date: 9/18/07

Title: E. Director

2007 SEP 20 PM 4:23
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Attachment 15a

Venezuela Information Office, LLC

Reg. #5609

Supplemental Statement - Financial Information - Insert for page 6

For Six Month Period Ending August 31, 2007

Section IV , 15 (a) Disbursements

| Expenses | Amount Paid |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Operating Expenses | \$293,399.09 |
| Travel & Transportation | \$38,733.07 |
| Administrative Services | \$16,849.98 |
| Office Supplies | \$6,414.31 |
| Total | \$355,396.45 |

OFFICE/REGISTRATION UNIT
2007 SEP 20 PM 4:22

Complementary Information:

1- No U.S. Government Officials or media representatives were guest.

2- Disbursements made to sub-contractors:

2-1 Segundo Mercado-Llorens: \$30,000.00

2-2 Leila McDowell: \$27,000.00

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------|---|--|
| FARA Reporting Log-VIO | | | Natali Fani March - August 2007 | | | |
| Date | Person Contacted | Position/Title | Organization | Contacted: | Subject Discussed | Position Advocated |
| 9-Mar-07 | Eva Young | Executive Director | La Trenza Organization | in-person | Involving Venezuela in their organization of Latin youth | sign up to our listserv, participate in La Trenza public events |
| 8-Mar-07 | Lisa Sullivan | organizer | Independent | e-mail | Discuss possibility of organizing an Interfaith Conference on Venezuela | Ask religious groups for support |
| 8-Mar-07 | Oswaldo Cuebas | General Consul | Republic of Bolivia | e-mail | helping Bolivia participate in a Latino radio show | organize a radio interview with El Zol Radio and the Ambassador of Bolivia |
| 08-Mar-07 | alexandra platkin | College Student | American University | e-mail | Student trip to Venezuela | connect the group with Venezuelan organizations |
| 11-Mar-07 | Eliseo Medina | Executive Vice President | Service Employees International Union | e-mail | Delegation of SEIU to Venezuela | Organize SEIU delegation to learn about Venezuela's labor movement |
| 14-Mar-07 | group of friends | | Friends in the East Coast | e-mail | Fact sheets on Human Rights and Venezuela's fight against drugs | Explain the facts on issues related to Human Rights and Drugs in Venezuela |
| 14-Mar-07 | Tom moore | community organizer | Left Books | e-mail | Venezuelan Tour in Colorado | Organize a tour for the VIO in Colorado on Venezuela |
| 14-Mar-07 | Gustavo Torres | Executive Director | CASA of Maryland | e-mail | Maryland friends of Venezuela | Think about the possibility of organizing a meeting of organizations to support Venezuela |
| 13-Mar-07 | Gloria Aparicio | Assistant to the Vice-President | University of Maryland | e-mail | Venezuelan Basketball player | the University of Maryland basketball team |
| 19-Mar-07 | group of friends | | Friends nation wide | e-mail | Barbara Walters interview to President Chavez | Distribute the transcript of the interview |
| 28-Mar-07 | Ted Loza | Chief of Staff | DC City Council Member Granham | person | Venezuela-DC relation | Advocate for cooperation between Venezuela and DC |
| 31-Mar-07 | Kali Akuno | Executive Director | People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Coalition | e-mail | New Orleans Conference on Venezuela's Solidarity work | Help organize the conference |
| 05-Apr-07 | Carla Vialpado | Assistant to the Executive Director | SEIU Local 105 | e-mail | Conferece for union members on Venezuela | Host the conference onVenezuela |
| 11-Apr-2007 | Barry Karlin | Doctor/Professor | University of Colorado on Public Health | e-mail | Student trip to Venezuela | connect the university with health care groups in Venezuela |
| 30-Apr-07 | labor list | | Labor list of friends | e-mail | Venezuela's Labor movement | Informing about the victories of Venezuela's labor movement |
| 03-May-07 | group of friends | | Friends in Colorado | e-mail | article on the Denver Post | Write letters to the editor |
| 03-May-07 | group of friends | | Friends in Rhode Island | e-mail | Contact your local legislators | call legislators to educate them about Venezuela's democracy |
| 04-May-07 | group of friends | | Friends in California | e-mail | Venezuela's tour in California | Participate in a week of events on Venezuela in California |
| 08-May-07 | group of friends | | Venezuelan friends | e-mail | Telesur | Ask friends to contact their TV-cable provider to incorporate TELESUR in their programming |
| 12-May-07 | Jose Pertierra | Lawyer | Lawyer for the Venezuelan government | e-mail | Posada Carriles | Review fact-sheet on the case of Posada Carriles |
| 14-May-07 | group of friends | | friends in DC | e-mail | Fact sheet on Luis Posada Carriles | Update our friends on the case of Luis Posada Carriles |
| 16-May-07 | Jan Strout | National Field Director | National Organization for Women | e-mail | Panel on Women around the world | Participation of the VIO in a panel on Women around the world |

[illegible]

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|------------------|--|---|
| FARA Reporting Log-VIO | | | Olivia Goumbri March- August 2007 | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Date | Person Contacted | Position/Title | Organization | Contacted | Subject Discussed | Position Advocated |
| 5-Mar-07 | Public in attendance | students and professors | American University | In person | Educating the public on Venezuela | go to VIO website, learn more |
| 5-Mar-07 | Amanda Hickman | Student | American University | Email | flyer for event | Distribute flyer and bio to public |
| 5-Mar-07 | Carlina Espinal and Cris Kirk | Director of International Affairs | NAACP | Email | Election report | post it on NAACP website |
| 5-Mar-07 | Steve Smith | Coordinator | Green Peace | Email | speaking to group | hold a meeting on Venezuela |
| 6-Mar-07 | Julia Buxton | Visiting Professor | Georgetown University | Email | Speaking on Venezuela | hold a meeting on Venezuela |
| 6-Mar-07 | Lucius Walker Jr. | Reverend | Pastors for Peace | Phone/Email | Mission Milagros | send out info for volunteers in US |
| 6-Mar-07 | Jim Green | Director | Brown University | phone | Venezuelan event | get flyer done and send out announcement |
| 6-Mar-07 | Miguel Luna | City councilman | Providence City Council | Phone | Venezuela event at city hall | get logistics settled and send out invites |
| 6-Mar-07 | James Keller | Reverend | Providence church | Email | Venezuelan events in Providence | send out announcements |
| 7-Mar-07 | Roy Levy Williams | member | NAACP Detroit branch | email | events for mid-west trip by Venezuelan ambassador | set up some public events with NAACP |
| 8-Mar-07 | Steve Smith | Coordinator | Green Peace | Email | Venezuela info on environment | Pass on articles to others |
| 8-Mar-07 | Ricardo Moreno | Coordinator | Bread for the World | Phone/Email | religious conference on venezuela | get a coordinating committee together |
| 9-Mar-07 | Lisa Sullivan | Coordinator | SOA Watch | Email | religious conference on venezuela | get a coordinating committee together |
| 9-Mar-07 | Miguel Luna | City councilman | Providence City Council | Email | Venezuelan reception | invite community organizations |
| 11-Mar-07 | John Locke | member | Rochester Committee on Latin America | Email | Venezuela evnet | put alink to our website on flyer |
| 11-Mar-07 | Benedict Mander | journalist | Financial Times | in person | Venezuela | be balanced and include a variety of voices in coverage of Venezuela |
| 12-Mar-07 | Khalil Abdullah | director | New American Media Washington DC | Email | US state dept report on human rights | send press release around on the topic |
| 12-Mar-07 | Jim Keller | Reverend | Providence church | Email | Ambassador visit to RI | can he set up meeting with cooperatives |
| 12-Mar-07 | Charlie hardy | author | Cowboy in Caracas | Email | book tour | can you speak in Washington DC |
| 14-Mar-07 | Benedict Mander | journalist | Financial Times | Email | list of contacts in Venezuela | contact contacts for alternative views in stories |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 16-Mar-07 | Selene Acosta | director | New England Association of Venezuelans | Email | upcoming trip of Ambassador to Boston | organize events with the ambassador |
| 18-Mar-07 | Judy Somberg | member | National Lawyers Guild | Email | upcoming trip of Ambassador to Boston | organize events with lawyers |
| 18-mar- | David Conforto | lawyer | National Lawyers Guild | Email | upcoming trip of Ambassador to Boston | organize events with lawyers |
| 18-Mar-07 | Cris Kirk | Director of International Affairs | NAACP | Email | upcoming trip of Ambassador to Boston | ask local NAACP to do an event |
| 21-Mar-07 | David Conforto | lawyer | National Lawyers Guild | Email | upcoming trip of Ambassador to Boston | host a dinner |
| 23-Mar-07 | Laura Safer Espinosa | Judge | State of NY | Email | Newsday article | write a letter to the editor |
| 27-Mar-07 | Yasmin Rincon | president | RI Venezuelan Association | Email | Venezuela | organize dinner with venezuelans |
| 29-Mar-07 | Iliana Estevez | assistant | Brown University | email | event at Brown | hand out sign up sheets |
| 29-Mar-07 | Robert Whitcomb | editor | Providence Journal | Email | op-ed on venezuela | publish op-ed by Venezuelan ambassador |
| 11-Apr-07 | general public | students | American University | In person | Venezuela | sign up for our listserve |
| 12-Apr-07 | Susan Scott | lawyer | National Lawyers Guild | Email | Venezuela tour in California | hold an event for ambassador |
| 12-Apr-07 | Peter Cohn | lawyer | NAACP | Email | Venezuela tour in California | hold an event for ambassador |
| 12-Apr-07 | Mary Ratcliffe | editor | San Francisco Bayview | Email | Venezuela tour in California | hold an event for ambassador |
| 16-Apr-07 | William Stebbins | journalist | Al Jazeera | Email | venezuela and IMF debt | cover paying off debt |
| 16_apr-07 | Benedict Mander | journalist | Financial Times | Email | news coverage on Venezuela | write about IMF debt being paid off |
| 18-Apr-07 | Peter Cohn | lawyer | NAACP | phone | visit to CA by ambassador | possible events on Venezuela to hold |
| 18-Apr-07 | Ted Radamaker | member | Democratic Club in Pomona | Email | Venezuela outreach | hold event with ambassador at Pomona College |
| 19-Apr-07 | June Brashers | member | Global exchange | Email | Venezuela tour in California | invite community organizations to event |
| 23-Apr-07 | Emira Woods | Co-director | Foreign Policy in Focus program at IPS | Email | Visit of Venezuelans to US | organize a briefing for assemblymen |
| 23-Apr-07 | Peter Cohn | lawyer | NAACP | Email | events in CA visit | organize event at World Affairs Council |
| 25-Apr-07 | Rick Rockwell | professor | American University | Email | Venezuela presentation on media | put out fact sheets and provide table space |
| 1-May-07 | general public | | Rochester Committee on Latin America | In person | Venezuela's history | learn more by checking our website and sign up to list serves |
| 10-May-07 | general public | students and professors | Berkely | In person | Venezuela | sign up for our listserve |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 11-May-07 | general public | | San Francisco Women's guild event | In person | Venezuela | sign up for our listserve |
| 11-May-07 | general public | | NAACP/National Lawyers Guild | In person | Venezuela | sign up for our listserve |
| 11-May-07 | general public | | Santa Monica University | In person | Venezuela | sign up for our listserve |
| 12-May-07 | general public | | World Affiars Council | In person | Venezuela | sign up for our listserve |
| 13-May-07 | general public | | Wilie Velasquez Inst | In person | Venezuela | sign up for our listserve |
| 17-May-07 | Laurie Ann Schagg | artist | | Email | Venezuela visit to CA | sign up for our listserve |
| 22-May-07 | Miguel Tinker Salas | academic | Pomona College | Email | RCTV case | can we add your name to press release as a voice for press to contact |
| 22-May-07 | Igor Rodriguez | student | Berkely | email | RCTV case | write an oped on RCTV |
| 22-May-07 | Martin Garbus | lawyer | | email | RCTV case | write an oped on RCTV |
| 23-May-07 | David Conforto | lawyer | National Lawyers Guild | email | RCTV case | write an oped on RCTV |
| 24-May-07 | Robert Whitcomb | editor | Providence Journal | email | RCTV case | publish op-ed on RCTV |
| 25-May-07 | Lisa Sullivan | Coordinator | SOA Watch | email | RCTV case | visit Congress members |
| 28-May-07 | Jim Green | Director | Brown University | email | RCTV case | write an oped on RCTV |
| 29-May-07 | Mary Ratcliffe | editor | San Francisco Bayview | Email | RCTV case | publish oped on RCTV |
| 1-Jun-07 | Lisa Sullivan | Coordinator | SOA Watch | Email | Venezuela | write a letter to the editor |
| 5-Jun-07 | general public | | KPFK radio | via phone | Venezuela | go to VIO website, learn more |
| 6-Jun-07 | Steve Ellner | professor | Venezuela University | Email | Venezuela's nationalizations | can we include you as a press contact in press release |
| 7-Jun-07 | Charlie hardy | author | Cowboy in Caracas | Email | Venezuela's nationalizations | can we include you as a press contact in press release |
| 7-Jun-07 | Jim Green | Director | Brown University | Email | Venezuela's nationalizations | can we include you as a press contact in press release |
| 7-Jun-07 | Barton Marshal | journalist | Newsday | Email | Venezuela's nationalizations | include info in upcoming stories |
| 13-Jun-07 | Antonio Gonzalez | director | Wilie Velasquez Inst | Email | Posada case | sign letter for Congress on Posada |
| 14-Jun-07 | Sharif Abdulla | staff | Democracy Now | email | Posada case | do a show on Posada |
| 14-Jun-07 | Ernest McMillan | activist | Cuba solidarity | Email | upcoming trip of Ambassador to TX | organize a public event on venezuela |
| 21-Jun-07 | Karyn Haller | chief of staff | Councilwoman Ada Edwards-Houston | Phone | upcoming trip of Ambassador to TX | organize city hall reception and events |
| 22-Jun-07 | Yoland Norman-Smith | director | Houston NAACP | Email | upcoming trip of Ambassador to TX | have a dinner with ambassador |
| 26-Jun-07 | D'Ann Johnson | lawyer | National Lawyers Guild | Email | upcoming trip of Ambassador to TX | have a lunch with ambassador |

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|-----------|---|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|---|--|
| 27-Jun-07 | Cris Kirk | Director of International Affairs | NAACP | Email | NAACP convention | distribute election report at convention |
| 2-Jul-07 | general public | students | Washington Center for Internships | In person | contemporary Venezuela | go to VIO website, sign up for listserve |
| 3-Jul-07 | Ada Edwards | Councilwoman | City of Houston City Council | Phone | visit of ambassador to Houston | organize concert for musical group Ellegua |
| 6-Jul-07 | Che Lopez | director | Southwest Workers Union | Email | upcoming visit of ambassador to San Antonio | organize lunch for ambassador with community organizations |
| 12-Jul-07 | Mari Jimenez | director | CRECEN | email | upcoming visit of Ambassador in TX | organize spanish press conference |
| 20-Jul-07 | Lupe Perez | assistant | Maria Elena Durazo at AFL-CIO | phone | delegation to Venezuela | organize a labor leader delegation |
| 24-Jul-07 | Karyn Haller | chief of staff | Councilwoman Ada Edwards-Houston | Phone | organizing delegation to Venezuela | set dates and agenda for delegation |
| 25-Jul-07 | Rudy Rasmus | pastor | St. John's Methodist Church in Houston | Email | begin delegation planning | set dates and agenda for delegation |
| 25-Jul-07 | Roy Levy Williams | member | NAACP Detroit branch | Email | upcoming trip to mid-west by ambassador | suggest meeting ideas |
| 27-Jul-07 | Henry Hamilton, James Gramling, and Charlie Shudson | judges | Milwaukee courts | Email | upcoming trip to mid-west by ambassador | organize a lunch for ambassador |
| 1-Aug-07 | Nane Alejandrez | director | Barrios Unidos | phone | delegation to Venezuela | set dates and agenda for delegation |
| 1-Aug-07 | Bo Taylor | director | Unity One | phone | delegation to Venezuela | set dates and agenda for delegation |
| 3-Aug-07 | Art Heitzer | lawyer | National Lawyers Guild | email | upcoming trip to mid-west by ambassador | host a lunch with lawyers |
| 9-Aug-07 | Doug Savage | director | World Affairs Council | Email | upcoming trip to mid-west by ambassador | host a talk at university for ambassador |
| 15-Aug-07 | Chuck Kauffman and Banbose Shango | directors | Venezuela Solidarity Network | In person | Venezuela conference | target progressives |
| 20-Aug-07 | Pachi Rodriguez | student | Florida | Email | recent article in Miami paper | write letter to the editor |
| 21-Aug-07 | Joan Drake | member | Women's Int; League for Peace and Freedom | Email | recent Washington Post article | write a letter to the editor |

FARA Report**Venezuela Information Office****Megan Morrissey**

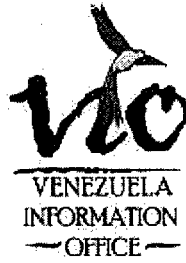
| <u>Date</u> | <u>Person Contacted</u> | <u>Position/Title</u> | <u>Organization</u> | <u>Contacted</u> | <u>Subject Discussed</u> | <u>Position Advocated</u> | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|---|--|------------------|--------------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 3/22 | Steven Dudley | Reporter | Miami Herald | emailed | Article | Suggested ideas for article on education | | |
| 3/22 | Christy Thornton | Director | NACLA | emailed | Photograph | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 3/26 | Lee Moriwaki | Associate Editorial Page Editor | Seattle Times | called | Letter to editor | Discussed letter to editor on op-ed piece Requested a correction to his article of 5 April | CRM/ISS/REGISTRATION UNIT | 2007 SEP 20 TH 4:22 |
| 4/13 | Scott MacKay | Reporter | Providence Journal | emailed | Correction | Requested more info on his research on PdVSA | | |
| 4/16 | Nelson Amirano | Professor | University of California San Diego | emailed | Resources | Requested correction to event listing on website | | |
| 4/16 | Pamela | Events Coordinator | Busboys and Poets Rochester Committee on Latin America | emailed | Website | Requested a link to the VIO website | | |
| 4/23 | Tara Ruttenberg | Assistant International Communications Coordinator | Georgetown University | emailed | Website | Asked to post a notice on VIO roundups | | |
| 4/25 | Dan Beeton | Editor | Center for Economic and Policy Research | emailed | Letter to editor | Asked about writing a response to a BBC article | | |
| 4/30 | Jim Naureckas | Editor | Extra! | queried | Article | Queried about writing an article on RCTV | | |
| 5/1 | Julia Buxton | Researcher | University of Bradford | emailed | Letter to editor | Asked about a letter to the editor | | |
| 5/8 | Charles Briggs | Professor of Anthropology | University of California Berkeley | emailed | Article | Requested op-ed on RCTV | | |
| 5/8 | Louis Perez | Professor of History | University of North Carolina Chapel Hill | emailed | Letter to editor | Asked about letter to the editor | | |
| 5/21 | Patrick Rucker | Reporter | Reuters | called | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 5/21 | Julia Sweig | Policy Analyst | Council on Foreign Relations | called | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/23 | Steve Rendall | Media Analyst | Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting | called | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/23 | Bob McChesney | Professor | University of Illinois | emailed | Press advisory | Requested availability for comments re:RCTV | | |
| 5/23 | Bill French | Professor | University of British Columbia | emailed | Letter to editor | Asked about Vancouver Sun letter to the editor | | |
| 5/23 | Antonio Ortiz | President | Vancouver Bolivarian Society | emailed | Letter to editor | Asked about Vancouver Sun letter to the editor | | |

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|------|--------------------------|--|---|---------|------------------|---|--|--|
| 5/24 | Steve Ellner | Professor | Universidad del Oriente | emailed | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/24 | Mark Crispin Miller | Professor | New York University | emailed | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/24 | Professor Rojas | Professor | SUNY Dutchess | emailed | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/24 | Julia Buxton | Researcher | University of Bradford | called | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/24 | Eric Alterman | Professor | City University of New York | emailed | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/24 | Daniel Hellinger | Professor of Political Science | Webster University | email | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/24 | Robert Parry | Reporter | Consort News | called | Press advisory | Requested availability for comment on RCTV | | |
| 5/24 | David Conforto | Lawyer | Conforto Law Group | emailed | Article | Asked to write an op-ed on RCTV | | |
| 5/25 | Charles Briggs | Professor of Anthropology | University of California Berkeley | emailed | Article | Asked him to read an article on Barrio Adentro | | |
| 5/29 | Lisa Sullivan | Latin America Coordinator | School of the Americas Watch | emailed | Letter to editor | Asked about writing a letter to the editor | | |
| 5/29 | Stephen Lendman | Writer | Freelance | emailed | Resources | Asked that VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 5/29 | Dan Beeton | International Communications Coordinator | Center for Economic and Policy Research | emailed | Event | Asked about an event hosted by CEPR | | |
| 5/29 | George Ciccariello-Maher | Ph.D. Candidate | University of California Berkeley | emailed | Article | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 5/31 | Lisa Sullivan | Latin America Coordinator | School of the Americas Watch | emailed | Interview | Requested an interview with Pacifica radio | | |
| 5/30 | Gary Marx | Latin America Correspondent | Chicago Tribune | emailed | Resources | Suggested use of government website as resource | | |
| 5/30 | Chris Kraul | Latin America Correspondent | Los Angeles Times | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 5/30 | Jose de Cordoba | Reporter | Wall Street Journal | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 5/31 | Diana Cariboni | Editor | Inter Press Service | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 5/31 | Bart Jones | Reporter | Freelance | emailed | Letter to editor | Asked about writing a letter to the editor | | |
| 6/1 | Simon Romero | Reporter | New York Times | emailed | Correction | Requested correction to article on RCTV | | |
| 6/4 | Jenny Mero | Reporter | Fortune Magazine | emailed | Resources | Asked that a VIO fact sheet be used as a resource | | |
| 6/4 | Gary Corseri | Reporter | Counterpunch | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |

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|------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------|------------------|---|--|--|
| 6/4 | Igor Rodriguez | Ph.D. Candidate | University of California Berkeley | emailed | Op-ed | Suggested corrections to op-ed on RCTV | | |
| 6/6 | Enrique Bravo | Ph.D. Candidate | Georgetown University | emailed | Interview | Asked that he do an interview on RCTV | | |
| 6/7 | Faye Williams | President | Natural Health Options | called | Event | Suggested contact with embassy on cultural events | | |
| 6/11 | Chris Kraul | Latin America Correspondent | Los Angeles Times | emailed | Resources | Suggested contact with Professor Steve Ellner | | |
| 6/11 | Ian James | Reporter | Associated Press | emailed | Article | Suggested ideas for land reform story | | |
| 6/11 | Mark Weisbrot | Co-Director | Center for Economic and Policy Research | emailed | Press contacts | Asked about media contacts | | |
| 6/13 | Nelson Amirano | Professor | University of California San Diego | emailed | Op-ed | Asked about writing an op-ed | | |
| 6/19 | Fernando Coronil | Professor | University of Michigan | emailed | Press advisory | Asked about availability to comment | | |
| 6/19 | John Otis | Latin America Correspondent | Houston Chronicle | called | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 6/19 | Matthew Walter | Reporter | Bloomberg | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 6/19 | Geri Smith | Reporter | Business Week | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 6/20 | Dan LaBotz | Professor | Miami University | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 6/20 | Bernd Debusmann | Senior Reporter | Reuters | emailed | Article | Suggested ideas for balanced reporting | | |
| 6/22 | Pamela Constable | Reporter | Washington Post | emailed | Article | Suggested ideas for balanced reporting | | |
| 6/25 | Christina Wright | Reporter | Houston Chronicle | emailed | Event | Asked for coverage of Ambassador's Texas visit | | |
| 6/26 | Charles Briggs | Professor of Anthropology | University of California Berkeley | emailed | Press | Asked about availability to comment on health | | |
| 6/27 | Judith Long | Editorial Editor | The Nation | emailed | Letter to editor | Clarified pre-pub edits to letter to editor | | |
| 6/28 | Pat Youngblood | Coordinator | Third Coast Activist Resource Center | emailed | Website | Asked that a link to VIO be put on the website | | |
| 6/28 | Lisa Sullivan | Latin America Coordinator | School of the Americas Watch | emailed | Letter to editor | Asked to write a letter to the editor | | |
| 7/9 | Michael King | Reporter | Austin Chronicle | emailed | Article | Asked for coverage of Ambassador's Texas visit | | |
| 7/9 | Jim Forsyth | Reporter | WOAI San Antonio | emailed | Article | Asked for coverage of Ambassador's Texas visit | | |
| 7/9 | Beatriz Ramacciotti | Director | Political Database of the Americas | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 7/10 | | Delegation | Witness for Peace | met | Resources | Suggested VIO resources for delegation | | |

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|------|------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------|----------------|---|--|--|
| 7/11 | Debi Carr | Editor | Foreign Policy in Focus | called | Website | Suggested the VIO be listed on FPIP website | | |
| 7/11 | Rick Rockwell | Professor of Journalism | American University | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 7/11 | Steve Bodzin | Reporter | Bloomberg | called | Article | Suggested coverage of Venezuela | | |
| 7/11 | Debi Carr | Media Analyst | Foreign Policy in Focus | called | Website | Suggested VIO be listed as "expert" on Vzla | | |
| 7/11 | Gail Phares | Delegation leader | Witness for Peace | emailed | Resources | Suggested VIO resources for delegation | | |
| 7/11 | Jeanne Lemkau | Delegation leader | Witness for Peace | emailed | Resources | Suggested VIO resources for delegation | | |
| 7/11 | Mavis Anderson | Delegation leader | Witness for Peace | emailed | Resources | Suggested VIO resources for delegation | | |
| 7/11 | G. DeLama | Foreign Editor | Chicago Tribune | emailed | Press contacts | Suggested communication with reporters | | |
| 7/15 | | Correction | San Antonio Express | emailed | Article | Asked for a correction re:column 7/15 | | |
| 7/17 | Benedict Mander | Reporter | Financial Times | emailed | Article | Suggested ideas for balanced reporting | | |
| 7/19 | Paulina Novo | Project Coordinator | Bank Information Center | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 7/19 | Abigail Poe | Program Assistant | Center for International Policy | met | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 7/24 | Yann Searcy | Ph.D. Candidate | California State University | emailed | Article | Suggested edits to article on Venezuela | | |
| 7/25 | Marc Elrich | City Councilmember | Montgomery County, MD | emailed | Resources | Asked that the VIO be used as a resource | | |
| 7/25 | John Otis | Latin America Correspondent | Houston Chronicle | emailed | Article | Asked about reporting on Venezuela | | |
| 7/25 | Kristen Hays | Reporter | Houston Chronicle | emailed | Article | Asked about reporting on Venezuela | | |
| 7/25 | Theresa Bradley | Reporter | Bloomberg | emailed | Correction | Suggested correction to article | | |
| 7/26 | Robin King | Professor of Economics | Georgetown University | emailed | Resources | Asked to read CEPR report on economy | | |
| 7/26 | Mark Weisbrot | Co-Director | Center for Economic and Policy Research | emailed | Resources | Asked for statistics on the economy | | |
| 7/26 | Enrique Bravo | Latin America Analyst | Eurasia Group | emailed | Resources | Asked to read CEPR report on economy | | |
| 7/30 | Joe Macaron | Reporter | Kuwait News Agency | emailed | Event | Recommended an art event | | |
| 7/31 | Eric Schummer | President | Venezuelan American Chamber of Commerce | called | Resources | Asked for information on business | | |
| 8/1 | Michael Gerson | Columnist | Washington Post | emailed | Op-ed | Asked about an op-ed | | |
| 8/1 | Stephen Kueffner | Reporter | Dow Jones | emailed | Article | Suggested ideas for balanced reporting | | |

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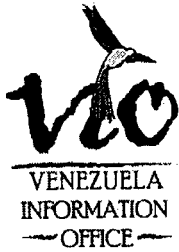


**Venezuela Information Office
Materials Disseminated
March 1, 2007-
August 31, 2007**

2007 SEP 20 PM 4:23
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Part I: Fact Sheets

201 SEP 20 PM 4: 23
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A MISSION TO END POVERTY STATE-SPONSORED SOCIAL PROGRAMS IN VENEZUELA

Venezuela's state owned-oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA), has embarked on an impressive campaign of corporate responsibility and social charity in the past few years. Alongside initiatives by the Venezuelan government to increase social service provision including universal access to healthcare and education, tens of thousands of lives have been saved and countless more improved as the country experiences a dramatic decline in poverty.ⁱ

When President Chávez was first elected, social inequality in Venezuela had reached nearly insurmountable levels; in 1999, almost half of all households (43%) were living in poverty. Despite its great oil wealth, Venezuela's representative democracy had, under previous administrations, failed almost half of the population. To address this historical deficit, the President, supported by the National Assembly and the electorate, began to think seriously about a multifaceted method to ameliorate poverty. Social welfare programs funded by the profits of Venezuela's lucrative oil business, were delivered as the solution. Today, these programs exist, and are known as "social missions."

The first social missions were instituted in 2003, at which point PDVSA increased its annual spending on social programs from \$40 million to \$249 million, and then again to reach a staggering \$1.2 billion the following year.ⁱⁱ Social development expenses have more than doubled each year since then, bringing expenditures in this area to a grand total of \$21.7 billion dollars over the last four years. PDVSA's 2007 Financial Report, which has been evaluated by a member of the widely respected auditing firm KPMG International, confirms these figures.

With such large injections of social spending by PDVSA, 22 social missions have been created in Venezuela to date. They range from cultural and environmental projects to broad-reaching efforts in healthcare and education. The most important are outlined below.

MISSION IDENTITY: BOOSTING VOTER PARTICIPATION

Among the first and most successful initiatives has been Mission Identity, or *Misión Identidad* in Spanish. Established in October 2003 and fully operational in 2004, this mission was carried out with the help of the National Office of Identification and Immigration (ONIDEX). It aims to implement Article 56 of the Venezuelan Constitution, which states:

PDVSA's Annual Social Development Expenditures

2003: \$249 million
2004: \$1.24 billion
2005: \$6.91 billion
2006: \$13.26 billion

Total: \$21.7 billion

The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. Further information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

All persons have the right to be registered free of charge with the Civil Registry Office after birth, and to obtain public documents constituting evidence of their biological identity, in accordance with law.ⁱⁱⁱ

Essentially a massive citizenship and voter registration campaign rolled into one, Mission Identity has given millions of Venezuelans national ID cards, granting them full citizenship rights for the first time. The first two phases of the program took place between October 2003 and the first half of 2006, during which time an estimated 18 million people received new or updated ID cards, and more than 5.5 million Venezuelans registered to vote for the first time in their lives.^{iv} Indigenous and immigrant populations were touched also, with 430,000 immigrants naturalized and almost 274,000 indigenous persons issued ID's.^v As of February 2007, the Mission estimated that it had served a total of 23 million people.^{vi}



Mission Identity has also resulted in increased rates of electoral participation, especially during presidential elections. In 2000, 11 million Venezuelans were registered to vote, but only a little over half (6 million) actually went to the polls. In contrast, in the 2004 referendum that took place less than one year after the project was launched, 14 million Venezuelans were registered to vote and 9 million exercised that right, dropping the abstention rate from 43.6% in 2000 to 30.1% in 2004.^{vii} As a result of this ongoing effort, in May 2006, more than half of Venezuela's 26 million citizens were registered to vote, and even more held official national ID cards. Presidential elections in December 2006 saw the highest voter turnout in Venezuelan history, with nearly 75% participation, rates that have not been matched in the U.S. since 1820.^{viii}

MISSION BARRIO ADENTRO: UNIVERSALIZING HEALTHCARE

Another key sector in need of massive improvements was Venezuela's health system. Under Article 83 of the 1999 Constitution, the government was made responsible for ensuring universal access to healthcare. A few years later, Venezuela embarked upon an aggressive strategy to provide a medical doctor to every neighborhood in need. This mission began out of necessity, after too few Venezuelan doctors responded to calls by the government to provide medical services to vulnerable populations in the country. Due to the failure of the Venezuelan medical community to respond to domestic health needs, the government turned to Cuba, a nation well-known for its medical missions.

Since Barrio Adentro (Inside the Barrio) began, an estimated 20,000 Cuban doctors have come to Venezuela to deliver free medical care in poor communities, sometimes even living with residents until a community health clinic equipped with a housing unit could be built. Thousands of community-based health committees have also been established to organize door-to-door surveys to determine the needs of each neighborhood and develop a comprehensive plan for improving health. According to the Pan American Health Organization, since 2003, doctors in Venezuela have conducted over 40 million free consultations, and health professionals have held millions of educational activities that focus on improving nutrition and preventing high-risk behaviors.^{ix} *Barrio Adentro* now has 1,600 community consultation centers throughout the country^x and the average Venezuelan's access to free healthcare has grown tremendously with an increase in primary care physicians throughout the country from 1,628 in 1998 to 19,571 in 2007.^{xi}

The mission estimates that as of May 2007, almost 50,000 lives had been saved.^{xii} Venezuelans have also been training to become community doctors; in April 2007, about 2,000 Venezuelans were awarded medical degrees.^{xiii}



Barrio Adentro II was formed in June of 2005 to construct 35 high tech centers, 600 diagnostic centers, and 600 rehabilitations centers throughout the country. Progress to date includes the construction of 175 diagnostic centers (29%), 183 rehabilitation centers (31%), and 6 high technology centers (17%), all of which are functioning today. Most recently, **Barrio Adentro III** was initiated with the goal of modernizing the nation's hospitals by updating technology and medical equipment and remodeling, improving, and expanding the hospital infrastructure.^{xiv}

MISSION ROBINSON: IMPROVING LITERACY AND EDUCATION

In addition to poor healthcare, Venezuela has also been historically plagued by illiteracy. To address this problem, Mission Robinson was founded to equip the population with essential literacy skills. On May 23, 2003, pilot programs began in the capital city of Caracas, as well as in the heavily populated states of Vargas, Miranda and Aragua. Overwhelmingly positive results in these initial programs prompted the official inauguration of the mission on July 1st of that year. The mission has targeted Venezuelans over 15 years of age who are unable to read or write, and draws on a Cuban methodology known as *Yo Si Puedo* or "Yes I Can," which utilizes audiovisual equipment and local volunteers to implement the vigorous program.

The results have been tremendous; 1.5 million citizens have been taught to read and write, increasing the literacy rate in Venezuela to 96%. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has applauded Venezuela's efforts, calling the country a leader in the region at reaching UN Millennium Development Goals for literacy. Several related missions have also been created to promote education. **Mission Robinson II** provides basic elementary education up to the 6th grade, while **Mission Ribas** targets those who did not enter or complete high school. As of June 2006, Mission Ribas had graduated 168,253 from high school with another 943,000 Venezuelans actively participating in the program.^{xv} A variety of scholarship programs and university missions also exist.

MISSION ALIMENTATION: PROVIDING PROPER NUTRITION

To further confront extreme poverty and hunger, the Venezuelan government created a subsidized food program and distribution system that provides high quality food and commodities at reduced prices. The Agricultural Supply and Services Corporation (CASA), and a chain of subsidized food markets (MERCAL) work in conjunction to meet daily nutritional requirements for all citizens. Additionally, food banks have been set up to provide free meals to the most disadvantaged. Requirements set by the Venezuelan National Institute for Nutrition afford all adults a daily diet of 2,600 calories.^{xvi} MERCAL specializes in reaching out to indigenous and rural communities through mobile markets, or fleets of trucks, that deliver affordable food through rugged terrain to remote areas.

In 2005 food subsidies benefited an average of 67% of the population and 43% in 2006.^{xvii} Today, over 8 million people are benefiting from a network of 6,000 markets that distribute more than 7

million pounds of food daily.^{xviii} Testament to the success of the program, an estimated 150,000 people living in extreme poverty in Venezuela are now able to eat a healthy diet each day at no cost.^{xix} Not only has this mission reduced hunger in Venezuela, it has employed more than 51,000 citizens from poor communities who staff the food centers and nutritional programs.^{xx}

THE IMPACT OF THE SOCIAL MISSIONS

A recent survey on the impact of the social missions conducted by the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) shows that almost half of all Venezuelan households (47.4%) have received benefits from the government-sponsored missions. Among low-income families, the number benefiting from the missions is even higher, at 62.3%.^{xxi}

Another report released in late July of 2007 by the Washington, DC-based Center for Economic and Policy Research shows similar results and notes that:

- Venezuela's household poverty rate has decreased by 31% between 2003, when the first missions began, and the end of 2006.
- Unemployment in Venezuela is at its lowest level in a decade, at 8.3% as of June 2007.
- The combined social spending per person by PDVSA and the State has increased by 314 percent from 1998 to 2006.^{xxii}

By all measures, Venezuela's state initiated social missions have played an integral role in reducing poverty in Venezuela. With plans to expand their reach, it is likely that poverty and social exclusion will continue to be on the decline in Venezuela.

ⁱ "The Venezuelan Economy in the Chavez Years," Center for Economic Policy and Research, July 2007, http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/venezuela_2007_07.pdf

ⁱⁱ PDVSA 2007 Financial Report, audited by Alcaraz Cabrera Vazquez.

ⁱⁱⁱ Article 56, Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

^{iv} Social Missions web site, <http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/misiones/mision-identidad.html>

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Venezuela's Ministry of Popular Power for Health, "Barrio Adentro Stats Up to Feb 2007."

<http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/component/>

^{vii} Venezuelan National Electoral Council web page, <http://cne.gob.ve/>

^{viii} Electoral Registry Audit, August 2006 http://cne.gob.ve/documentos/auditoria_definitiva.pdf

^{ix} 2006 Report on Barrio Adentro, Pan American Health Organization, Caracas, Venezuela. July 2006.

^x <http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/misiones/mision-barrio-adentro-1-2-3.html>

^{xi} "The Venezuelan Economy in the Chavez Years," Ibid.

^{xii} Ministry of Popular Power for Health. "Barrio Adentro Stats up to Feb 2007."

<http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/component/>

[option,com_docman/Itemid,0/task,catalog_view/gid,30/dir,DESC/order,date/limit,5/limitstart,30/](http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/component?option=com_docman/Itemid,0/task,catalog_view/gid,30/dir,DESC/order,date/limit,5/limitstart,30/)

^{xiii} "Chavez Vows to Seize Overpriced Food, Healthcare Providers," by Theresa Bradley, *Bloomberg*. 24 April 2007.

^{xiv} Social Missions website, <http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/misiones/mision-barrio-adentro-1-2-3.html>

^{xv} Social Missions website, <http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/misiones/mision-ribas.html>

^{xvi} 2006 Annual Report, Ministry of the Popular Power for Food..

^{xvii} "The Venezuelan Economy in the Chavez Years," Ibid.

^{xviii} "Mercal no sufrirá incrementos," Radio Nacional de Venezuela, April 20, 2004.

^{xix} "Alimentación para personas bajo pobreza extrema," Venezuelan National Institute of Nutrition, March 2005.

^{xx} Social Missions website, <http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/misiones/mision-alimentacion.html>

^{xxi} Agencia Bolivariana de Noticias, July 25, 2007.

^{xxii} "The Venezuelan Economy in the Chavez Years," Ibid.

Understanding Venezuela's Nationalization Plan

In January of 2007, President Chavez announced the nationalization of three key industries: electricity, telecommunications, and strategic oil operations. These areas encompass much of the infrastructure essential to national development in Venezuela. Past private ownership in these industries made them insufficiently responsive to domestic needs, and the new nationalization plan aims to rectify this imbalance.

Though often mischaracterized as a government expropriation campaign, Venezuela's nationalization plan involves due respect for property and investor rights. According to a Houston Chronicle article, "Chavez... is not nationalizing the entire economy without compensation to companies... but rather is buying back a few key strategic utilities such as the CANTV telecommunications company or taking a majority government share in four heavy oil projects in the eastern Orinoco River basin...[Chavez] insisted Venezuela does not plan to copy the Soviet or Cuban model of complete state dominance of the economy."¹



Economists and development experts have noted that the switch from private to state ownership can improve efficiency and broaden access to services. Joseph Stiglitz, former World Bank chief economist, told a Colombian radio station in an interview that "national industries can be very successful."² He cited the social security system in the U.S. as an example. In fact, in many countries, state-owned companies frequently partake in economic sectors such as utilities, transportation, and other essential services.

The Lessons of History

State control of key sectors of the economy and companies providing basic services is not a new phenomenon in Venezuela. In fact, privatizations are the more recent trend. For example, the phone company CANTV became privately run for the first time as recently as 1991, and the steel industry ended 23 years of national control with its privatization in 1998. Unfortunately, policy-makers and executives too often favor prevailing trends as the only acceptable policy options.

The Venezuelan oil industry was nationalized in 1976, and state oil company PDVSA was created to direct revenues toward national development. However, as former PDVSA advisor Bernard Mommer has pointed out, oil executives began to seek greater independence from the Venezuelan state not long after nationalization. Investments were shifted away from non-oil development projects benefiting the national population, and by the time Chavez was elected in 1998, PDVSA's directors were aiming to re-privatize the company.

¹ "Chavez as Castro? It's not that simple in Venezuela," *Houston Chronicle*, February 6, 2007. <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/editorial/outlook/4532139.html>

² <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/386302.asp?id=386302>

and cut formal ties to the state.³ Nationalizations today will ensure a long-term and large-scale redistribution of state profits through increased social services and public aid programs.

The Legal Framework

The nationalizations will occur during the 18-month period in which Venezuela's Enabling Law is in effect. This law grants the president the power to issue decrees in 11 specific areas of government policy and was approved in a public session of the National Assembly in January 2007, with the stipulation that all decrees issued under the law must be approved by the legislature and may be rescinded in popular referendums called by 5% of the voting public. Enabling powers are a frequently used executive mechanism that have been employed by Chavez and his predecessors in accordance with Venezuelan constitutional law.

Moving Forward Through Negotiations

One key feature of Venezuela's nationalization process that has been highlighted by the government is *just compensation* for private property. A member of the National Assembly Finance Committee member stated that, "Confiscation, expropriation are banned words in our dictionary... We will be tough but fair negotiators. There are legal mechanisms in the Constitution that give support to our plan."⁴ Moreover, constitutional guarantees for private property specifically dictate that shareholders in private companies must be compensated.

Improved *efficiency and access to services* are among the chief goals of the nationalization plan. Domestic markets for electricity, telecommunications, and oil will be well served by the changes, which involve a mixture of public and private ownership that allots the government a dominant voice in these strategic industries. This way, Venezuelan citizens may enjoy the full benefits of national sovereignty over resources.

³ Bernard Mommer, "Subversive Oil," in *Venezuelan Politics in the Chavez Era: Class, Polarization, and Conflict*, Ellner and Hellinger eds., Lynne Rienner, 2003.

⁴ "Venezuela to Pay Companies in Nationalization Plan," Bloomberg, April 16, 2007.

Case 1: Telecommunications

While under private ownership, the phone company CANTV concentrated its operations in Caracas, ignoring much of the infrastructure needs of the rest of the country. Under national control, CANTV may expand telecommunications networks to all parts of the country – including fiber-optic cables for internet access – thus creating more favorable conditions for social and economic development in rural areas. Also, workers will be better served by the change; pension guarantees long demanded by employees will become a reality under new ownership.⁵

Case 2: Strategic Oil Operations

The Venezuelan government is seeking negotiated settlements with all private companies presently involved in oil operations along the Orinoco Belt. As well, state-owned oil company PDVSA will assume a majority share of the reserves without putting an end to private investment in this profitable region. Negotiations are expected to be successful: oil industry analyst Patrick Esteruelas has said that, "A large majority of investors in Venezuela's heavy oil projects are expected to abide by new tougher terms to ensure future revenues... the incentives to remain are still strong."⁶ In April a ConocoPhillips executive expressed confidence that his company can count on full compensation from PDVSA.⁷

Case 3: Electricity

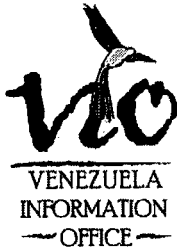
Negotiations between the Venezuelan government and the largest electricity company in the country, U.S.-owned Electricidad de Caracas, lasted only a month. Company executives accepted the terms of the sale of its shares proposed by the government and noted that, "it has been a fair process [that] respected the rights of investors."⁸

⁵ "Chavez says he is ready to transform Venezuela," Associated Press, January 10, 2007.

⁶ "Venezuela: Orinoco's Future," *Latin Business Chronicle*, May 19, 2007.

⁷ "No threat to Venezuela compensation, says ConocoPhillips chief," *Houston Business Journal*, April 18, 2007.

⁸ "Venezuela to Nationalize Power Company," Natalie Obiko Pearson, Associated Press, February 8, 2007.



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Press Freedoms in Venezuela: The Case of RCTV

Overview

In late 2006, the Venezuelan government announced its decision not to renew the 20-year broadcasting license of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV). Though the television station will no longer operate on the open-access airwaves, cable and satellite broadcasts will still be permitted. Though the decision has faced criticism by those who claim it is a move to restrict press freedoms, most governments worldwide enjoy the constitutional right to regulate media licensing, including that of the U.S. RCTV's non-renewal does not violate legal norms in Venezuela, nor does it significantly alter the balance of power in Venezuela's vociferous, opposition-affiliated and privately-owned media. The decision forms part of a larger policy program for democratizing Venezuela's airwaves.

The Grounds for Non-Renewal

Historically, RCTV has demonstrated extremely poor business conduct and its frequent legal infringements comprise the most important reasons for the non-renewal decision. An op-ed by Bart Jones of *Newsday* appearing in the *Houston Chronicle* asserts that "it's doubtful [RCTV's] actions would last more than a few minutes with the FCC [in the U.S.]."ⁱ In fact, RCTV has often faced legal sanctions for its poor practices, and indeed has been closed or fined numerous times by various administrations, including President Chavez's most recent predecessors. The television station is also in default for tax payments spanning a three year period.ⁱⁱ This most recent decision is not an isolated case, but is the first opportunity the government has had to reconsider its licensing since the 20-year contract began.

RCTV's Legal Offenses

| | | |
|------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1976 | Closed for 3 days | Tendentious news coverage |
| 1980 | Closed for 36 hours | Sensationalist programming |
| 1981 | Closed for 24 hours | Airing pornographic scenes |
| 1989 | Closed for 24 hours | Airing advertisements for cigarettes |
| 1991 | Programming suspended | Program "La Escuelita" suspended |

Most importantly, in 2002, RCTV ran ads encouraging the public to take to the streets and overthrow the democratically elected president. Once Chavez was forcefully removed from office, the station continued to collude with the coup government by conducting a news blackout. In fact, one of the managing producers of Venezuela's highest-rated newscast, the RCTV program *El Observador*, testified that he was instructed by RCTV's owner, Marcel Granier, on the day of the coup to show "No information on Chávez, his followers, his ministers, and all others that could in any way be related to him."ⁱⁱⁱ

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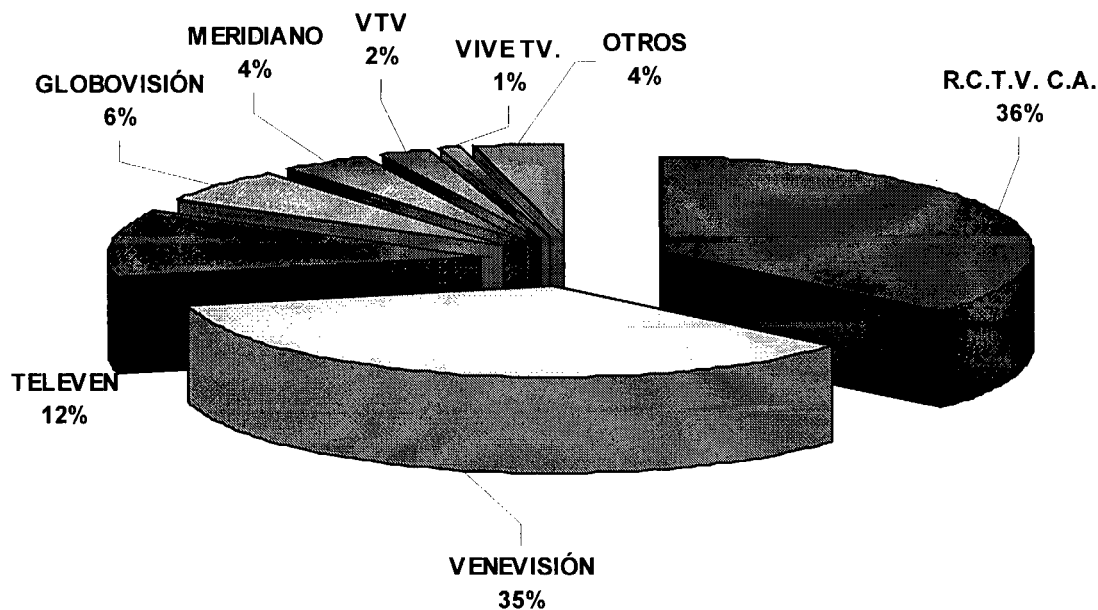
The Legal Right not to Renew

The Venezuelan government, like most others worldwide, has the constitutional right to make decisions regarding all public broadcasting. In the U.S., the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) makes decisions regarding the licensing of broadcasters. As in Venezuela, that agency has the power to grant broadcasting rights to any outlet, and to deny those rights to broadcasters that do not comply with legal guidelines. Surprisingly absent from debates around RCTV is the fact that our own FCC has closed three TV stations due to legal infractions since 1969: WLBT-TV in Mississippi, CBS affiliate WLNS-TV in Michigan, and Trinity Broadcasting in Miami. In Venezuela, access to the broadcast spectrum is granted and regulated in accordance with the Organic Law of Telecommunications contained in constitutional Article 156.

Democratization of the Airwaves

The decision not to renew RCTV's broadcasting license will allow for a broader democratization of Venezuela's airwaves, offering access to the broadcast spectrum. RCTV has long had a disproportionate influence in the Venezuelan media by maintaining the most powerful broadcasting signal in the country for more than 50 years and is currently one of two private channels that together claim 70% of all TV revenues each year. RCTV's non-renewal will allow for a redistribution of the airwaves, and may be used to provide community programming and public television, allowing new voices and views to be heard in Venezuela.

Revenue shares of television companies in 2006



The Opposition and Freedom of Expression

With President Chavez's landslide electoral victory as an alternative to the two major political parties in 1998, the privately-owned media in Venezuela assumed the role of the traditional political parties, and became an outlet for them to challenge and derail the actions of the newly elected President.^{iv} The fact that the media – which is majority privately owned – is closely associated with the opposition is undisputed and may shed light on why the government's decision not to renew RCTV's license is currently being criticized.

In 2002, Human Rights Watch found that, "Far from providing fair and accurate reporting, the media by and large seek to provoke popular discontent and outrage in support of the hard-line opposition."^v Several journalists have even noted, "the five main privately owned channels—Venevisión, Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), Globovisión, Televen and CMT—and nine out of the 10 major national newspapers, including El Universal, El Nacional, Tal Cual, El Impulso, El Nuevo País and El Mundo, have taken over the role of the traditional political parties, which were damaged by the president's electoral victories. Their monopoly on information has put them in a strong position. They give the opposition support, only rarely reporting government statements and never mentioning its large majority...Their investigations, interviews and commentaries all pursue the same objective: to undermine the legitimacy of the government and to destroy the president's popular support...the media is still directly encouraging dissident elements to overthrow the democratically elected president – if necessary by force..."^{vi}

The Venezuelan private media plays a controversial role in the political life of the country, but not all human rights organizations cite a deterioration of freedom of expression.^{vii} The Venezuelan government has respected and defended civil liberties, including freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and the RCTV non-renewal does not constitute an infringement on press freedoms.

Media Ownership in Venezuela

| | | |
|------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Television | Of 81 stations | ... 79 (97%) are privately owned |
| Radio | Of 709 stations | ... 706 (99%) are privately owned |
| Newspapers | Of 118 companies | ... 118 (100%) are privately owned |

ⁱ "Chavez as Castro? It's not that simple in Venezuela," *Houston Chronicle*, February 7, 2007.

ⁱⁱ "RCTV ha sido el canal más sancionado en Venezuela," *Agencia Bolivariana de Noticias*, March 29, 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Venezuela's Media Coup" by Naomi Klein, *The Nation*, February 13, 2003.

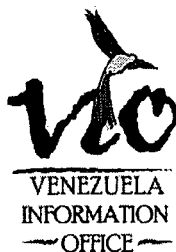
^{iv} Golinger, p. 91.

^v "Venezuela's Political Crisis," *Human Rights News*, Human Rights Watch, October 9, 2002.

^{vi} Maurice Lemonine, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 2002.

^{vii} Maurice Lemonine, "How Hate Media Incited the Coup Against the President," in Gregory Wilpert, ed., *Coup Against Chavez in Venezuela* (Fundación Venezolana para la Justicia Global, 2003), p. 158.

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TERRORIST LUIS POSADA CARRILES and the Double Standard in the U.S. War on Terror

Luis Posada Carriles is one of Latin America's most notorious criminals, a terrorist protected by the U.S. and allowed to live freely within its borders. Recruited by the CIA in 1962, Posada has since carried out deadly bombings and other crimes against humanity.

The Deadliest Terrorist Attack before 9/11

In 1976, the Cuban-born Venezuelan citizen blew up an airliner, killing all 73 passengers aboard, including 24 teenage members of Cuba's champion fencing team and 11 Guyanese medical students. Until 9/11, this was the deadliest attack on an airplane ever to occur in the Western Hemisphere. Posada was arrested in Venezuela and charged with masterminding the attack. However, he escaped from prison in 1985 and resumed coordinating terrorist acts throughout the region. In 1997, Posada was linked to several bombings in Havana hotels that left an Italian tourist dead and several injured. In 2000, he was arrested in Panama for attempting to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro using C-4 explosives in a school auditorium. Each time, Posada evaded those seeking to bring him to justice.

Extradition Requests Ignored

In March 2005, Posada entered the U.S. illegally. He was allowed to languish in a luxurious Miami apartment, emboldened by the fact that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had not detained him. In May of 2005, Venezuela formally requested his extradition from the U.S. so that he could be tried for 73 counts of murder in the 1976 bombing. The U.S. has yet to honor the extradition request or even respond to it. Only after bragging to the Miami press that the DHS was not looking for him, Posada was detained by DHS officials who neglected even to handcuff him as they took him away.

The Immigration, Customs and Enforcement Agency (ICE) quickly stated that it would not deport Posada to Cuba or "a country acting on behalf of Cuba". By doing so, ICE set a precedent that indicated the U.S. government's lenient stance on Posada even before his immigration case had begun. Despite Venezuela's repeated requests that the U.S. detain Posada for extradition purposes, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has yet to act. On June 15, 2005, Venezuela filed a formal extradition request with the State Department, providing voluminous documentary evidence of Posada's crimes. The State Department referred the case to the DOJ, which failed to bring it to court as required by law.

Protected by the U.S.

By flaunting extradition treaties, the U.S. has chosen to treat Posada Carriles' case as a minor immigration offense, charging him only with illegal entry into the country. Posada brought a single witness to testify in that case, his long time lawyer and associate Joaquín Chaffardet, who was never cross-examined nor questioned about his own links to Posada and terrorist activities. Instead, Chaffardet was allowed to testify as an objective expert on Venezuela's human rights record. The DHS submitted no evidence against Posada, indicating to the defense and to the Judge that the U.S.

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government would prefer he be granted Convention Against Torture relief. However, no evidence exists to support claims that he would be tortured in Venezuela.

22 months have passed since Venezuela's first extradition request, and the U.S. has failed to present Posada's case to a federal court, despite treaty obligations that require it to do so. Though a U.S. ICE officer admits that Posada has a "long history of criminal activity and violence in which innocent civilians were killed,"¹ the Justice Department has not charged him with the 1976 attack. This is despite the binding obligations of a 1971 international convention to which the U.S. is a party. Nor has Posada been classified as a terrorist, which the Patriot Act allows. Indeed, the 79-year-old terrorist has never been charged by U.S. justice officials with participating in a violent act.²

Posada Freed by U.S. Courts

On May 9, 2007, immigration charges brought against Posada were overturned by Texas District Judge Kathleen Cardone, leaving a man branded by the U.S. DOJ as "a dangerous criminal and an admitted mastermind of terrorist plots" free to roam a country he entered illegally and from which another court has ordered him to be deported. There is no explanation for having a high profile case that deals with a known-terrorist be ruled as an immigration matter, when it clearly should be overseen by the highest levels of government. "In addition to engaging in fraud, deceit and trickery, this Court finds the Government's tactics in this case are so grossly shocking and so outrageous as to violate the universal sense of justice. As a result, this Court is left with no choice but to dismiss the indictment," Judge Cardone wrote in her scathing opinion.³

As international condemnation mounts against the U.S.' failure to prosecute an admitted terrorist, congressional leaders have demanded to know why U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales never declared Posada a security threat nor jailed him under the Patriot Act. Congressman William Delahunt (D-MA) stated in a letter to Gonzales that "Mr. Posada's release from prison calls into question our commitment to combating terrorism and raises concerns about a double standard in our treatment of terrorists."⁴ Delahunt is launching an investigation into Posada's relationship with the U.S. government as well as the failure of the Bush administration to designate Posada a terrorist. A former prosecutor himself, Rep. Delahunt called Judge Cardone's critique of the government's handling of the case unprecedented. Interestingly, Cardone threw out transcripts containing incriminating evidence against Posada on the grounds that an interpreter hired by the U.S. government was unreliable.

A Double Standard in the War on Terror

By refusing to extradite or prosecute Posada, the U.S. demonstrates contradictions in its war on terror. While claiming to lead a global offensive against terrorism using measures such as foreign intervention and the restriction of civil liberties at home, the U.S. also continues to recruit, tolerate, and protect terrorists within its own borders. A consistent hesitance to bring Posada to justice – and, more broadly, to allow political loyalties to define who is a terrorist, regardless of criminal records – confirms this fact.

Venezuela's Ambassador to the White House, Bernardo Alvarez, recently confirmed the same: "While relations between Venezuela and the U.S. have been strained, nothing should prevent the U.S. government from either extraditing Posada to Venezuela or prosecuting him for the 1976 bombing. Posada's violent attack could not be justified then; much less should it be overlooked now. Should Posada be allowed to escape justice for his vicious crimes, it will send a powerful message to the international community that some terrorism is acceptable. It isn't."⁵

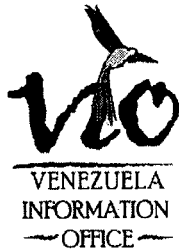
¹ "The Terrorist We Tolerate", Rosa Brooks, *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 2007.

² "National Security Archive: Documents Link Luis Posada Carriles to 1976 Cubana Airlines Bombing," AP, May 3, 2007.

³ "Pressure grows to prosecute Cuban exile," Carol Williams, *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 2007.

⁴ "Venezuela Vows to Press Posada Carriles Extradition," Theresa Bradley and Guillermo Parra-Bernal, *Bloomberg*, May 9, 2007.

⁵ "Terrorism is Never Acceptable," Bernardo Alvarez, *The Politico*, May 8, 2007.



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Venezuela's Efforts Against Drug Trafficking

Based on its proximity to Colombia, the source of almost 90 percent of cocaine entering the United States¹, Venezuela has been used by smugglers as a transit point for drugs originating in Colombia and destined for Europe and the United States. This geographic position alone behooves the government of Venezuela to be pro-active in the fight against drug trafficking, an initiative that wasn't taken seriously under past administrations. Unfortunately, Washington continues to diminish Venezuela's efforts at combatting narco-trafficking and has even put up roadblocks to its advancement.

2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)

On March 1, 2007, the U.S. Department of State released its 24th International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) that presumes to rate the efforts of countries in the areas of international drug trade, chemical control, money laundering and financial crimes.² This report makes a number of misleading accusations against Venezuela and omits a significant number of achievements including high level international cooperation that Venezuela has embarked upon in recent years.

The report comes almost two years after Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez announced that Venezuela would suspend its cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). On August 8, 2005 he stated, "The DEA was using the fight against drug trafficking as a mask, to support drug trafficking and to carry out intelligence in Venezuela against the government... We have detected intelligence infiltration that threatened national security and defense. Under those circumstances we decided to make a clean break with those accords."³

Venezuela's International Cooperation

Within this context, the State Department issued its 2007 INCSR in early March condemning Venezuela for a "lack of international counternarcotics cooperation".⁴ A quick review of the facts however, clearly shows that the Venezuelan government has a long history of cooperating with foreign governments and international organizations to combat narco-trafficking and terrorism.

In November 2001, Venezuela's drug czar was elected to a one-year term as president of the Organization of American States' Commission for Drug Abuse Control (CICAD) and participated in hemispheric efforts to develop its Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) to improve

¹ U.S. Department of State's 2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2007/vol1/html/80855.htm>

² U.S. Department of State's 2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2007/>

³ "Venezuela Leader Accuses DEA of Espionage", AP, August 07, 2005

⁴ U.S. Department of State's 2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2007/vol1/html/80855.htm>

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counternarcotics cooperation.⁵ Later, in November of 2005, Venezuela hosted the First International Assembly of Observatories of Drugs with the participation of over forty countries. During this three-day conference, experts shared their methodology and technical expertise in combatting narco-trafficking.⁶ Moreover, according to the State Department's own 2003 report⁷, Venezuela has signed or is a party to the following international agreements:

- 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs
- 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances
- 1972 Protocol Amending the Single Convention
- 1988 UN Drug Convention
- UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons
- Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants
- Inter-American Convention Against Corruption

Venezuela has also signed a number of important bilateral agreements with the U.S., including a ship-boarding agreement from 1991 (updated with a new protocol in 1997), a Memorandum of Understanding concerning cooperation in narcotics, and a customs mutual assistance agreement.⁸ Venezuela is a party to numerous bilateral and multilateral narcotics control agreements, including bilateral agreements with 15 other Latin American and Caribbean nations, as well as one Asian and three European countries.

Cooperation between Colombia and Venezuela

Counter to the State Department's assertion that Venezuelan "arrests are limited to low-level actors" in September of 2006 the Venezuelan government captured Colombia's second most wanted narco-trafficker, Farid Feris Domínguez, and immediately handed him over to Colombian officials.⁹ In part this was due to the increase in cooperation between Venezuela and Colombia in the areas of counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism. In 2005 Colombia and Venezuela signed a pact pledging to create greater cooperation between the two countries' authorities and to develop more effective enforcement mechanisms to combat drug trafficking. Since then Venezuela has caught and turned over many suspects to Colombian authorities, including the well known FARC rebel leader Gentil Alvis Patino.¹⁰

Additionally, both countries have developed a joint operation of manual eradication of coca, poppy, and marijuana crops in the Perija Mountains along the Colombian-Venezuelan border. This plan, known as Operation Sierra, which the United Nations and the Organization of American States also contributed to, resulted in the eradication of 110 hectares of poppy, 80 hectares of coca plants and 15 hectares of marijuana. 18 laboratories of coca based paste and 11 rural camps in which the supplies for the primary processing of the coca leaves were stored have been completely destroyed.¹¹

⁵ 2002 International Narcotic Control Strategy Country Report, <http://caracas.usembassy.gov/www1695.html>

⁶ "Comienza I Encuentro Internacional de Observadores de Droga"

<http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/index.php?act=ST&f=2&t=26650&hl=operacion+sierra&s=b96df712e38b8c09b6fc2d1dd3a6d23f>

⁷ 2003 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, <http://caracas.usembassy.gov/www2135.html>

⁸ 2002 International Narcotic Control Strategy Country Report, <http://caracas.usembassy.gov/www1695.html>

⁹ "En 24 horas, Farid Domínguez fue atrapado y deportado", El Universal, September 24, 2006

¹⁰ "En 24 horas, Farid Domínguez fue atrapado y deportado", El Universal, September 24, 2006

¹¹ Plan Sierra 2005 Erradica 215 hectarias de Drogas, http://www.ona.gob.ve/Noticias/09112005_1.htm

More recently in December 2006, Venezuela acquired new radar systems, enabling an increase in patrols and the beefing up of its monitoring along the 1400-mile Venezuelan-Colombian border. These new radar systems also fill the gap in coastal surveillance that resulted when the United States discontinued renting its radar equipment to Venezuela in 2004.¹²

Cooperation between the European Union and Venezuela

The European Union has entered into two agreements with Venezuela¹³. The scope of these agreements range from suppression of trafficking and demand reduction to specific controls on money laundering and precursor chemicals.¹⁴ In fact, in May 2006 Venezuela's main opposition newspaper, *El Universal*, highlighted the cooperation between Venezuela and European authorities when detaining a Venezuelan ship containing drugs:

*"A joint operation between the Venezuelan National Guard and the Spanish and French militaries led to the May 23 interdiction of a Venezuelan ship carrying more than two tons of cocaine. The operation took place in international waters off the African coast...According to information provided, the ship departed from Sucre state and was interdicted at sea after Venezuelan authorities communicated intelligence on the cargo to French and Spanish authorities, which allowed the operation to proceed. The ship was intercepted 300 nautical miles from the coast of Cape Verde on the African continent. ...Venezuelan authorities have detained 624 people for drug trafficking in 2006. Additionally, they have confiscated more than 18 tons of a variety of illegal drugs, a number that represents an increase of 34 percent from 2005."*¹⁵

Furthermore, Venezuela has signed an accord with France and Spain to process satellite images that detect illegal airstrips and airplanes carrying drugs¹⁶ and Venezuelan drug enforcement officials are currently being trained by the French government in airport drug interception methods.¹⁷ An anti-drug agreement with Germany is also in the works.¹⁸

U.S. Arms Embargo on Venezuela

On May 15, 2006 the U.S. State Department decided to restrict the sale of weapons to Venezuela while continuing to accuse Venezuela of "backsliding in the global war on drugs".¹⁹ By imposing an arms embargo which blocks the acquisition of military equipment and parts, the United States has refused to recognize the right of Venezuela to obtain necessary systems of defense and internal patrol, many of which are crucial in the fights against drug-trafficking.

Moreover, the U.S. has actively interfered with Venezuela's right to purchase military equipment from other countries by blocking the sale of Spanish patrol boats as well as Brazilian aircraft to

¹² "New radars in anti-drug efforts", *El Universal*, December 15, 2006

¹³ "Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Venezuela on precursors and chemical substances frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances" [http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=EN&numdoc=21995A1230\(14\)&model=guichett](http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=EN&numdoc=21995A1230(14)&model=guichett)

¹⁴ 2003 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, <http://caracas.usembassy.gov/wwwwh2135.html>

¹⁵ "Venezuelan Ship Detained With Drugs in Cape Verde." *El Universal*, May 26, 2006

¹⁶ Website of Venezuela's National Office of Anti-Drugs, http://www.ona.gob.ve/Noticias_2006.htm

¹⁷ Embajada de Francia y ONA dictan seminario en trafico aereo de drogas http://www.ona.gob.ve/Noticias/05032007_1.htm

¹⁸ "Venezuela Says US Accord Not needed." *Reuters* <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSN0316329620070303>

¹⁹ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0703020106mar02,1,217239.story?coll=chi-newsnationworld-hed>

Venezuela in recent years. In the case of the Brazilian aircraft, the president of the Brazilian Aeronautics Company (Embraer), Mauricio Botelho, stated that "The plane we are talking about is not an attack plane. Its purpose is law enforcement in missions directed against drug and arms trafficking."²⁰ The Brazilian Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, also remarked that Brazil was not in agreement with the US position.²¹ Along those same lines, the President of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, even defended the sale of planes and boats to Venezuela and characterized them as helpful to the war on drugs, "The sale of aircraft and ships has the objective of patrolling the coasts..., controlling the sea borders,... against narco-trafficking... and in no way does it have any offensive nature."²² The arms embargo does not allow any company utilizing U.S. parts to sell equipment to Venezuela. Currently, of all the nations with whom the U.S. has imposed an arms ban, Venezuela is the only one that has not been designated by the U.S. Department of State as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Venezuela's Advances in Counter-Narcotics Operations

Despite these roadblocks, Venezuela is beefing up its efforts to combat drugs domestically and has recently passed new legislation that sends a clear message to those involved in the illegal narcotics trade. In 2005, the Organic Law Against Illicit Traffic and Consumption of drugs and Psychotropic Substances was passed as well as the Organic Law Against Organized Crime. These laws stipulate that those who perform human and/or drug trafficking and harbor drugs and illegal chemical substances will be subject to six to eight years in prison. The punishment will be increased if the offender is a government official, a member of the National Guard, a judicial authority, or anyone who impersonates such individuals.²³

Similarly, in January 2006, Venezuela made a very significant advancement by transforming the National Commission Against Illegal Drug Use (CONACUID) into the National Office of Anti-Drugs (ONA), handing over the financial, administrative, and functional autonomy to the institution that would now implement public policies and strategies of the State against the production, trafficking, money laundering and consumption of illicit drugs.²⁴

Some of Venezuela's most recent achievements are highlighted below:

- According to ONA, 43.2 tons of drugs were seized in Venezuela in 2004, the last full year of cooperation with the DEA. In 2005, 77 tons of drugs were seized by Venezuelan authorities; moreover, 2005 witnessed an increase in the seizures of "ecstasy" at the Simon Bolivar International Airport of Maiquetia in the State of Vargas and the Santiago Marino International Airport of the State of Nueva Esparta, totaling 79,260 pills. In 2006 60.3 tons of drugs were captured.²⁵
- In March 2006 Venezuelan authorities used GPS systems to discover two clandestine runways that were used for narco-trafficking in the states of Bolivar and Sucre. Both runways operated between Venezuela, Colombia and the Caribbean Sea and were used to store drugs²⁶.

²⁰ "Embraer comments on impasse blocking sale of airplanes to Venezuela" Agencia Brasil 23 January, 2006.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Agence France Press, <http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/index.php?act=ST&f=2&t=15423>, March 29, 2005.

²³ "Official Gazette No. 38.287", Caracas, October 5, 2005 & "Official Gazette No. 38.281", Caracas, September 27, 2005.

²⁴ Website of Venezuela's National Office of Anti-Drugs, <http://www.ona.gob.ve/ONA/Antecedentes.htm>

²⁵ Website of Venezuela's National Office of Anti-Drugs, <http://www.ona.gob.ve/Estadisticas.htm>

²⁶ Venezuelan Ministry of Interior and Justice, http://www.mij.gov.ve/article.php3?id_article=510.

- Currently (March 2007), Venezuela's Integrated National Service for Customs and Tax Administration (SENIAT), is installing unobtrusive X-ray machines at ports, making it possible to examine an entire container for drugs. This was already being done with imports, but now enforcement agents can apply the practice to exports as well. Right now, the ONA is doing a feasibility study for the creation of a Special Anti-Drug Task Force that would operate in the states bordering Colombia.²⁷

Statistics on confiscations in Venezuela are public and are available at the website of the National Office on Anti-Drugs www.ona.gob.ve

Findings of the Report: Politics over Evidence

The 2007 INCSR finds particular fault with the narco-trafficking enforcement of Venezuela and Bolivia, two countries whose political and economic agendas are at odds with the Bush Administration's goals in the region, while praising the efforts of close U.S. allies Mexico and Colombia. The praise for Colombia's drug enforcement seems especially questionable given that Colombia is the world's primary producer of cocaine and South America's top producer of heroin²⁸ in spite of the \$4.7 billion that the U.S. has spent in anti-drug efforts in Colombia since 2000.²⁹ In fact, cocaine production in Colombia is on the rise.³⁰ Moreover, a recent political scandal in Colombia has linked high-level government officials to paramilitary groups known for their involvement in drug trafficking.³¹ This raises serious questions about the credibility of the U.S. State Department's report and whether its findings are political rather than objective and informational.

²⁷ "No es necesario firmar un acuerdo antidrogas con EEUU", *El Universal*, March 3, 2007

²⁸ U.S. Department of State's 2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2007/vol1/html/80855.htm>

²⁹ "Rethinking Plan Colombia: some ways to fix it", *Christian Science Monitor*, September 29, 2006

³⁰ "Coca Production Up besides Record Eradication." *AP*. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13445739/>

³¹ "Colombia political scandal imperiling US ties", *Boston Globe*, February 25, 2007

207 SEP 20 PM 4: 23
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HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

Venezuela's Health Missions at Work

Despite Venezuela's great wealth, poor and rural citizens historically lacked access to basic healthcare services. Constitutional reforms in 1999 made healthcare a fundamental human right afforded to all. To fulfill this mandate, thousands of community health clinics have been established throughout Venezuela to provide care and medicine to the country's neediest citizens. According to Venezuela's Health Ministry, more than 80 percent of the population now receives some form of government-sponsored healthcare. Another striking achievement has been the decline in postnatal mortality rates, which fell by 50 percent between 1995 and 2005.ⁱ Venezuela now has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in Latin America, and is set to reach the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015.ⁱⁱ

HEALTH SYSTEM FOUNDATION

During the 1980s and 1990s, the public health sector saw very little growth compared with the rapid expansion of its private sector counterpart. For example, only 50 new public health facilities were established in those two decades versus some 400 private clinics.ⁱⁱⁱ This effectively ruled out the universal delivery of public health services. Moreover, during this period, public investment in health was on the decline. Health expenditures accounted for 13.3 percent of the national budget in 1970, falling to 9.3 percent in 1990 and a mere 7.89 percent in 1996, representing only 1.73 percent of Venezuela's GDP.^{iv} The World Health Organization documented the results, pointing out that between 1990 and 1998, Venezuela's impoverished population had reduced access to medical drugs because of cost-recovery policies.^v All drugs were sold through private pharmacies, with the exception of the most expensive treatments such as cancer medications and hormone therapies, which patients had the option of obtaining through private nonprofit foundations.



Venezuela is now undertaking an aggressive program that is changing the course of healthcare. Under Article 83 of the Constitution, which makes the State responsible for ensuring universal access to healthcare, the Venezuelan government has halted the process of privatization. Specifically, the nation's oil wealth is now being used to finance direct healthcare and an array of social programs known as social missions. Among these is Barrio Adentro, which provides free medical services to the population. In 2005 alone, the state-owned oil company invested \$5 billion in the social missions. This figure is in addition to the regular budget of the Ministry of Health.^{vi}

Article 83 of the 1999 Constitution states that "Health is a fundamental social right and the responsibility of the State, which shall guarantee it as part of the right to life."

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INSIDE THE BARRIOS

Mission Barrio Adentro (Inside the Barrio) began in 2003 as a humanitarian effort undertaken in Caracas with the assistance of Cuba. Since then, it has grown into a national public health program committed to wiping out the healthcare deficit through a partnership of the Venezuelan Ministry of Health, the Cuban Medical Mission in Venezuela, and the Office of the Pan American Health Organization in Aruba, the Netherlands, and Venezuela.^{vii} Barrio Adentro began by necessity after too few Venezuelan doctors responded to calls to join a government campaign to provide care to underserved populations in impoverished neighborhoods.^{viii} Because the Venezuelan medical community showed insufficient response, the government turned to Cuba, which is renowned for its medical missions, and has doctors volunteering in 69 countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Barrio Adentro has already sent an estimated 20,000 Cuban doctors to Venezuela to serve in poor communities, sometimes even living with residents until a community health clinic equipped with a housing unit can be built. Moreover, thousands of community-based health committees have been established to organize door-to-door surveys to determine local needs and develop a comprehensive plan for health improvement. Since 2003, doctors have conducted over 40 million consultations, and health professionals have held millions of additional educational programs focusing on preventing high-risk behaviors and improving nutrition.^{ix} By Barrio Adentro's own estimates in May 2007, almost 50,000 lives had been saved since the mission began.^x Record numbers of young Venezuelans are also training to become community doctors so that they can provide full care for their own communities. Some 2,000 Venezuelans were awarded medical degrees toward this effort in April 2007.^{xi}

Due to the mission's great success, Barrio Adentro II and Barrio Adentro III have also begun. The first aims to make critical medical services available to the poor through the construction of high tech diagnostic and rehabilitation centers throughout the country, and the latter will expand the nation's public hospital system.

ACCESS TO PRESCRIPTIONS: THE SUMED PROGRAM

The SUMED (Distribution of Medicine) program complements the efforts of Barrio Adentro by subsidizing a national chain of pharmacies at which prescription drugs are 30 to 40 percent cheaper than market prices.^{xii} The program focuses on distributing essential medications and vitamin supplements. Victims of AIDS, cancer and chronic diseases also receive cost-free treatment and medication. Now, more than 4,400 community health clinics offer 129 essential medicines and treat over 97 percent of the most common illnesses in Venezuela.^{xiii}

DIET AND NUTRITION

To confront poverty and hunger, the Venezuelan government created programs that provide high-quality food at low prices, using commercial and social food distribution networks to reach the poorest sectors of the population. The Agricultural Supply and Services Corporation (CASA) and Subsidized Price Food Markets (MERCAL) work together to meet the nutritional requirements of these citizens, which the Venezuelan National Institute for Nutrition estimates to be 2,600 calories per day.^{xiv} MERCAL, for instance, specializes in reaching Indigenous and rural communities through mobile markets, fleets of trucks that deliver food through rugged terrain in order to provide food at discounted prices. Today, over 8 million people are benefiting from a network of 6,000 markets that distribute more than 7 million pounds of food daily.^{xv} Testament to the success of the program, an estimated 150,000 people living in extreme poverty in Venezuela are now able to eat a healthy diet each day at no cost.^{xvi}

ⁱ Ministry of Popular Power for Health. "Report on Infant Mortality Death in Venezuela until 2005." http://www.mpps.gob.ve/ms/direcciones_msds/Epidemiologia/Estadistica/Archivos/GrafInfantil.pdf

ⁱⁱ UNICEF, "Latin America's Child Survival Report Card". <http://www.unicef.org/progressforchildren/2004v1/latinCaribbean.php>

ⁱⁱⁱ Pan American Health Organization. "2006 Report on Barrio Adentro." Caracas, Venezuela. July 2006.

^{iv} World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/nha/country/ven/en/>

^v Pan American Health Organization. "2006 Report on Barrio Adentro." Caracas, Venezuela. July 2006.

^{vi} Últimas Noticias. "Interview of Journalist Ernesto Villegas to Petroleum Minister Rafael Ramírez." 26 February 2006.

^{vii} Pan American Health Organization. "2006 Report on Barrio Adentro." Caracas, Venezuela. July 2006.

^{viii} Pan American Health Organization. "2006 Report on Barrio Adentro." Caracas, Venezuela. July 2006.

^{ix} Pan American Health Organization. "2006 Report on Barrio Adentro." Caracas, Venezuela. July 2006.

^x Ministry of Popular Power for Health. "Barrio Adentro Stats up to Feb 2007." http://www.misionesbolivarianas.gob.ve/component?option=com_docman/Itemid,0/task,cat_view/gid,30/dir,DESC/order,date/limit,5/limitstart,30/

^{xi} Theresa Bradley. "Chavez Vows to Seize Overpriced Food, Healthcare Providers." *Bloomberg*. April 24, 2007.

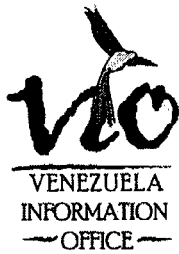
^{xii} Ministry of Popular Power for Health. "SUMED guarantees treatment of patients." 14 March 2007.

^{xiii} Ministry of Popular Power for Health. "There is medicine for HIV Patients." 21 February 2006.

^{xiv} Ministry of Popular Power for Food. 2006 Annual Report.

^{xv} Radio Nacional de Venezuela. "Mercal no sufrirá incrementos." 20 April 2004.

^{xvi} Venezuelan National Institute of Nutricion. "Alimentación para personas bajo pobreza extrema." March 2005.



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Afro-Venezuelans and the Struggle Against Racism

Venezuela is making unprecedented progress in combating the historical legacy of racism and recognizing the national importance of its African heritage. New government initiatives including reforms addressing poverty and inequality have afforded Afro-Venezuelans greater social, economic, and political rights.ⁱ Now, despite centuries of institutionalized racism and systematic political and social exclusion, Afro-Venezuelan citizens are experiencing gains that are the result of new action being taken by government and society.

The Legacy of Slavery

An estimated 100,000 enslaved Africans were brought to Venezuela between the 16th and 19th centuries.ⁱⁱ Most were sold to the central coastal states, which drove an agricultural economy based in coffee and cacao. Abolition occurred in 1854, but freedom did not bring equality. Racism continued to flourish in Venezuela throughout most of the 20th century, and African heritage was denied through an emphasis on racial mixing. The *mestizo*, born of European, Indigenous, and African blood, became a cornerstone of national identity. In this scheme, Blackness was devalued to such an extent that state policies sought to "whiten" the population through European immigration.ⁱⁱⁱ Venezuela, like many other Latin American countries, used the idea of the *mestizo* to uphold a myth of racial democracy that denied rampant discrimination on the basis of skin color.^{iv}

The Impact of the Bolivarian Revolution

Hugo Chavez is the first president in Venezuela's history to claim and honor his Indigenous and African ancestry. Since his first election in 1998, reforms have been instituted to address the problems faced by the Afro-Venezuelan community and to extend to them important social, political, and economic rights. Historically, poor and rural citizens have lacked access to health care and education. Because cities and states with the largest Afro-Venezuelan populations face the highest levels of poverty, the recent social missions instituted by the Chavez administration have had a huge impact.

Education: Massive literacy campaigns and new educational institutions have allowed more than 1.5 million adults to learn to read and write, or to return to school. Due to subsidized education programs for elementary, high school, and college-aged students, Afro-Venezuelans are partaking in education at unprecedented rates. Once a privilege enjoyed by only a few, education is now considered a human right.

Health Care: In 1999, Venezuela became the first Latin American country to guarantee all citizens the right to basic health care. To meet this goal, a partnership was initiated with the government of Cuba, which has provided 20,000 medical professionals to treat previously underserved Venezuelans. In the past 5 years, thousands of community health clinics have been established throughout the country. Today, more than 60% of the Venezuelan population receives some form of government-sponsored health care. The results have been dramatic; between 1996 and 2002, infant mortality rates decreased by 38%.

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Political Participation: Since 2003, millions of Afro-Venezuelans have been issued national ID cards guaranteeing them the citizenship rights they previously lacked. Article 56 of the 1999 Constitution guaranteed all persons the right to free registration with the Civil Registry Office, a measure which has allowed electoral participation among Afro-Venezuelans to grow tremendously. In unprecedented numbers, Afro-Venezuelans are exercising their right to vote as well as to run for political office. Afro-Venezuelans occupy important posts in the Chavez administration as legislators, ambassadors, and assemblymen. It is the first administration in Venezuelan history to include a Black Venezuelan in the President's Cabinet.

Relations with Africa and the Caribbean

Venezuela has prioritized its relations with Africa by opening 18 new embassies in countries including Mali, Morocco, Congo, Angola, Burkina Faso, and many more. The diplomatic initiative has been accompanied by cooperative energy agreements as well as programs in health and education.^v In the Caribbean, Venezuela is helping ease the energy burden in many countries through a plan called PETROCARIBE, which provides countries with oil at market prices made affordable through beneficial financing terms. This aid provides member countries with energy and stimulates national and regional economic and social development. Currently, all but 3 countries in the Caribbean belong to PETROCARIBE.

The Struggle Within the Struggle

Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution has made great strides in addressing the racism that has been the legacy of slavery and its continued manifestations in high rates of poverty, hunger, disease, and illiteracy among Afro-descendants. Because obstacles still exist, the struggle against discrimination is moving forward. Afro-Venezuelans still lack constitutional recognition, though many are confident that future reforms will include legislation guaranteeing the political, economic, and social rights of the community. Though Afro-Venezuelans currently comprise up to 40% of the Venezuelan population, reliable census data is still lacking. Civil society groups such as the Network of Afro-Venezuelan Organizations are working to end the statistical invisibility that has been the handmaiden of marginalization. Plans are being made to improve the 2010 census, which many hope will bring self-awareness.^{vi}

A new consciousness is being forged by Afro-Venezuelans who today recognize and value their African heritage within the larger society. Anti-racist groups in Venezuela have entered into powerful alliances with the government through initiatives such as the Presidential Commission to End Racial Discrimination, which was started in 2005. New awareness campaigns designed in cooperation with the social missions emphasize the national historical contribution of Afro-Venezuelans. Taking stock of the struggle against racism, the renowned Afro-Venezuelan activist and scholar Jesús "Chucho" García has said: "There is a great opening now; it's the moment for our recognition. That's what we are going to fight for."^{vii}

ⁱ "The Political Status of Afro-Venezuelans in the Bolivarian Revolution: A Democratic Measure for Venezuela and a Hemispheric Imperative," by James Early and Jesús "Chucho" García, Olivia Burlingame Goumbri, ed., *The Venezuela Reader: The Building of a People's Democracy* (EPICA, 2005).

ⁱⁱ Jesús María Herrera Salas, "Ethnicity and Revolution: The Political Economy of Racism in Venezuela," *Latin American Perspectives* 32:2, March 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Chucho García Interview: Race and Racial Divides in Venezuela," By Gregory Wilpert, *Venezuelanalysis*, Jan. 21, 2004. <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/articles.php?artno=1091>

^{iv} *Café con Leche: Race, Class, and the National Image in Venezuela*, Winthrop R. Wright (University of Texas Press, 1993).

^v "Africa-Venezuela: Weaving New Alliances With Cultural Threads," By Humberto Márquez, Inter Press Service, Oct. 28, 2005. <http://ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=30807>

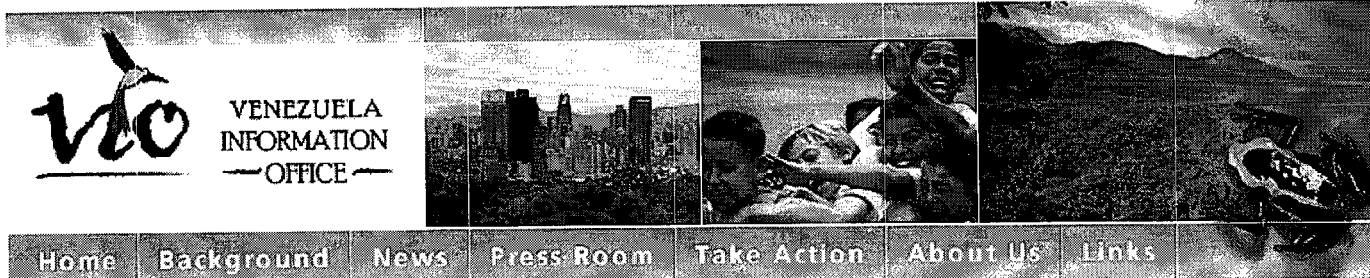
^{vi} "Venezuela: Afro-descendants Seek Visibility in Numbers," By Humberto Márquez, Inter Press Service, June 22, 2007. <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38278>

^{vii} "Chucho García Interview: Race and Racial Divides in Venezuela," By Gregory Wilpert, *Venezuelanalysis*, Jan. 21, 2004.

Part II: Press Releases

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2007

Contact: Olivia B. Gombri, Venezuela Information Office, (301) 613-4767

Reading Between the Lines: The U.S. State Department's 2006 Report on Human Rights Highlights Venezuela's Commitment to Human Rights

Justice & Prosecution

• Of the high level criminal cases highlighted in the State Department's report that showed some involvement of police officers or military personnel: "Twenty-two individuals subsequently faced charges, two of whom were Caracas Metropolitan Police officers. Approximately half of those charged confessed to involvement and were immediately sentenced to prison. At year's end the remaining accused were awaiting trial." Furthermore, "President Chavez acknowledged excessive use of military force in these killings; as a result of an investigation, at least 14 soldiers were arrested. On November 15, 10 soldiers were charged in the killings of the six miners." In addition, "On August 31, 24 police officers were sentenced for their involvement in the June 2005 killings of students. Sentences ranged from three to 30 years' imprisonment."

• "Detainees were promptly informed of the charges against them."

• "There were no reports that security forces killed prisoners;"

• "The government permitted prison visits by independent human rights observers, and such visits took place during the year."

Freedom of Press

• "While the law permits the president to suspend telecommunications broadcasts, it was not invoked during the year..."

• "The law permits the government to order national broadcast cadenas (lengthy, commercial-free programming, usually consisting of presidential speeches) to require all broadcast media to preempt scheduled programming and transmit the government's entire message. Use of cadenas was much more restrained in elections during the year, compared to 2005."

• "There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet."

Academic Freedom

• Professional and academic associations "indicated they generally operated without interference..."

Refugees & Human Trafficking

• "In practice the government provided protection against refoulement, the return of a person to a country where they feared prosecution."

• "The government cooperated with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organization in assisting refugees and asylum seekers."

- "In August the Ministry of Interior and Justice hosted a roundtable on trafficking in persons; the minister of justice presided, and nearly every cabinet ministry had high level representation...The event culminated with a comprehensive plan to address trafficking in persons in the country."

- "The government provided trafficking victims with psychological and physical examinations."

Elections

- "The constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right through periodic elections held on the basis of universal suffrage."

- "The European Union, the OAS, and the Carter Center sent official electoral observation missions and deemed the elections to be generally free and fair."

- "On December 3, voters reelected Hugo Chavez as president in elections that observers judged to be free and fair. President Chavez was reelected with approximately 63 percent of the national vote. Chavez received more votes in each state in the country, as well as in the Caracas metropolitan area."

- "Eighty-one different political parties appeared on the presidential ballot in December."

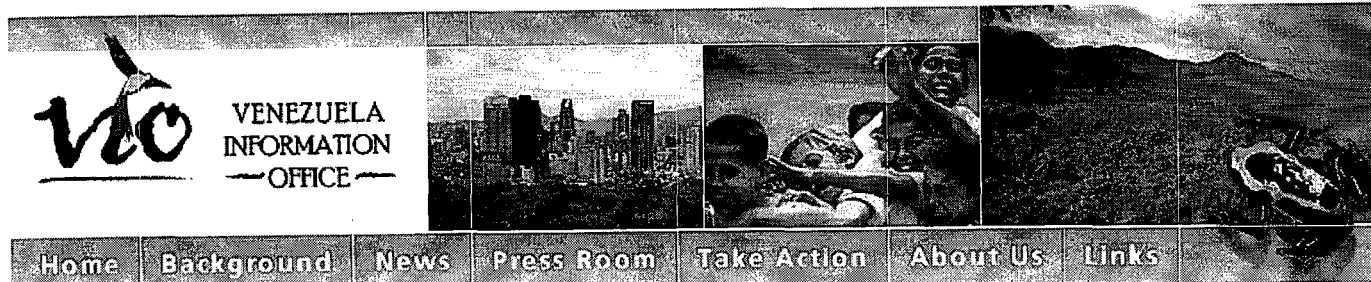
The Full 2006 Human Rights Report by the U.S. Department of State may be viewed at:
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78909.htm>

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Back >>>

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 9, 2007

Contact: Olivia B. Gombri, Venezuela Information Office, (301) 613-4767

Reading Between the Lines: The U.S. State Department's 2006 Report on Human Rights Highlights Venezuela's Commitment to Human Rights

Washington, DC - A recent report by the U.S. Department of State provides information challenging the idea that human rights violations are widespread under the Chavez Administration in Venezuela. The Venezuela Information Office (VIO), an agency dedicated to presenting an accurate view of contemporary Venezuela, strongly rejects the report's primary assertion that the human rights situation in Venezuela is characterized by "Politicization of the judiciary, harassment of the media, and harassment of the political opposition" and opposes this speculative language which offers little concrete evidence to back up its claims.

"Focusing on alleged human rights issues with long term structural problems and largely unfounded accusations by government opponents can not be substituted for hard evidence. As this report points out, Venezuela has not engaged in organized campaigns of torture, police repression, or killing", said Olivia Gombri, Executive Director of the Venezuela Information Office.

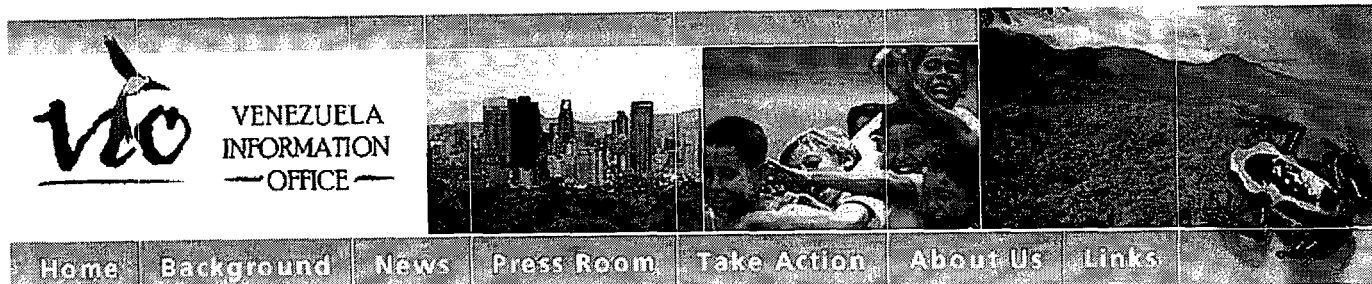
The VIO vigorously resists this trend and calls upon the U.S. Department of State to report its findings without political bias. In a statement regarding the State Department's Human Rights Report issued in early 2005, the Deputy Director of the Washington Office on Latin America, Kimberly Stanton, noted "political considerations are evident in some of the findings... The credibility of the reports depends on consistent, objective analysis. This year the U.S. government policy priorities are affecting the evaluation of the data..." Washington has also been criticized in the past by human rights groups for inadequate reporting and data collection.

A thorough reading of the U.S. State Department's 2006 Report on Human Rights actually reveals that Venezuela strives to guarantee human rights and in fact, is beefing up measures to provide accessible avenues for lodging complaints and holding violators accountable. The following findings, taken directly from this year's report, are of extreme importance in assessing Venezuela's efforts in the area of human rights; unfortunately, they are downplayed in the report's general overview:

Political Freedoms

- "The constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the government generally respected this right in practice."
- "There were no reports that the government or its agents committed any politically motivated killings;"
- "A wide variety of independent domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were somewhat responsive to their views."
- "The government cooperated with international governmental organizations and permitted visits by OAS representatives."

Continue to p. 2 >>>



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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 9, 2007

Contact: Megan Morrissey, Venezuela Information Office, 202-347-8081 x.602

U.S. Court Frees Self-Proclaimed Terrorist Posada Carriles

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Federal Court judge Kathleen Cardone dismissed charges yesterday against self-proclaimed terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, whose trial for lying to immigration officials was set to begin on Friday. The motion to drop charges and suppress evidence was brought by Posada Carriles, who was released from a New Mexico jail last month on \$350,000 bail and allowed to await trial in Miami.

Judge Cardone ruled that a seven count indictment brought by the U.S. government against Posada Carriles, who is also implicated in the deadly bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976, was based on an unreliable immigration hearing. Tapes and transcripts of a conversation between U.S. immigration officials and Posada Carriles were suppressed after doubts were raised about the accuracy of an interpreter hired by the government.

"International law dictates that terrorists are criminals who can be extradited, but Washington is protecting Posada, a former C.I.A. agent, and thus discrediting their battle against terrorism. Letting well-known terrorists walk free is a blow to principles of justice and humanity," says Natali Fani of the Venezuela Information Office.

Charges brought against Posada Carriles for making false statements to enter the U.S. are the most recent in a long history of legal violations by the notorious anti-Castro militant. 73 deaths were reported in the 1976 bombing thought to be masterminded by Posada, who escaped from prison in 1985 while facing charges in Venezuela, the country of which he is a citizen. Venezuela's repeated requests for Posada's extradition have been ignored by the U.S. government.

The families of the 73 victims of the 1976 bombing recently gathered in Cuba to protest what is seen as a lack of commitment by the U.S. court system to bring the perpetrator to justice. Others have cited the delays in bringing Posada Carriles to trial as an example a double standard in U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

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To: media@veninfo.org
Cc: olivia@veninfo.org; natali@veninfo.org
Subject: final NY press release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

Contact: Olivia B. Gombri
April 30,
2007

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ACADEMICS AND CLERGY DEBATE THE CHAVEZ AGENDA IN ROCHESTER



WHAT: "Hugo Who?" Conference

WHO: Three experts on Venezuela: Olivia Gombri, Executive Director of the Venezuela Information Office, Professor Dan Hellinger of Webster University, and priest Charles Hardy.

WHEN: Wednesday, May 2nd at 7 PM

WHERE: School of the Arts, 45 Prince St., Rochester NY

On Wednesday May 2nd, the Rochester community will host three experts on Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and the effect of his policies in the region at the "Hugo Who?" Conference. Speakers include Olivia Gombri, Executive Director of the Venezuela Information Office in Washington, DC; Professor Dan Hellinger of Webster University; and writer Charles

Hardy, whose new book is entitled *Cowboy in Caracas*. This will be the first time that members of the Rochester press and community will have the opportunity to hear from such a distinguished group of experts on Venezuela all at the same time.

The event will focus on President Chavez, a controversial leader whom the polarized debate has cast as both friend and foe of the U.S. and its people. Topics will include Venezuela's domestic policy and the president's new power to rule by decree (recently granted by the national assembly), freedom of the press and the case of RCTV's broadcasting license, and Venezuela's foreign policy. Venezuela is the U.S.'s second-largest trading partner in Latin America. Despite political sparring between the two nations, trade, especially in oil, is better than ever.

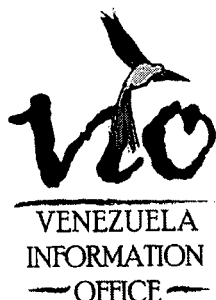
The panel discussion will bring new perspectives on Hugo Chavez to light.

Olivia Goumbri will be available for comment prior to and following the debate. As the Executive Director of the Venezuela Information Office, she led an electoral observer delegation comprised of NAACP leaders, U.S. Supreme Court Justices, and public officials during Venezuela's presidential elections last December. She is also the editor of *The Venezuela Reader: The Building of a Peoples Democracy*, and has written extensively on the topic.

###

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Olivia B. Goumbri
Executive Director
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OLIVIA GOUMBRI
May 7, 2007
4767

CONTACT:

(301) 613-

Venezuelan Ambassador to Visit Bay Area Will Hold Press Conference

You are cordially invited to a continental breakfast and news briefing with Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez Herrera. The event will be held on Wednesday, May 9th at 8 a.m, on the 2nd floor of the Mission Language and Vocational School, located at 2929 19th Street at Alabama Street in the Mission District. Ambassador Alvarez will address Venezuela's oil and energy policy, social transformation and domestic policy, and the case of self-proclaimed terrorist Luis Posada Carriles. Following the ambassadors remarks, there will be an opportunity to ask questions.

The ambassador is visiting the Bay Area to speak with local officials, community leaders, and academics in order to explain Venezuela's future policy objectives and promote dialog between Venezuela and the U.S. In addition to the press conference, he will also be appearing at the following venues:

- Berkeley, Tuesday May 8, 4-6pm, speech on Venezuela US Relations & the Bolivarian Revolution sponsored by the Center for Latin American Studies, 554 Barrows Hall/ Ethnic Studies Conference Room
- World Affairs Council, Wednesday, May 9, 12noon-2pm, dialog at the World Affairs Council Auditorium, 312 Sutter Street, 2nd Floor, San Francisco
- Stanford University, Wednesday May 9, 4-5:30pm, speech on Venezuela: Revolutionizing Energy Integration and Democracy, Building 320, Room 105

Bernardo Alvarez Herrera became Ambassador of Venezuela to the United States on January 27, 2003. Previously, he held various public positions such as Vice Minister of Hydrocarbons at the Ministry of Energy and Mines, Deputy to the National Congress, Vice Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee and Chairman of the Energy and Mines Committee, Executive Secretary of the Working Group on Political Reforms of the Presidential Commission for the Reform of the State and Chief of the Research and Development Division at the Venezuelan Institute of Foreign Trade. In the international area he has held positions as Representative of Venezuela and

Member of the Executive Committee to the U.S. Energy Council, Principal Coordinator for Venezuela in the Cooperation Agreement on Energy with the United States, and Head of the Venezuelan Delegation to the Ministerial Conferences of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. He has taught at the School of Political and Administrative studies of the Universidad Central de Venezuela and at the Superior School of the Venezuelan Air Force as well as Academic Advisor at the Institute of Higher Studies on National Defense. Ambassador Alvarez holds a degree in Political Science from the Universidad Central de Venezuela and a Masters degree in Development Studies from the University of Sussex, England.

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Megan Morrissey

Media Analyst

Venezuela Information Office

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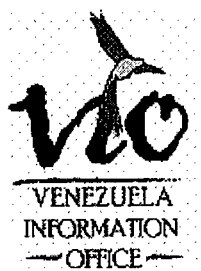
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Megan Morrissey

From: Megan Morrissey [media@veninfo.org]
Sent: Saturday, May 26, 2007 1:47 PM
To: 'media@veninfo.org'
Subject: Experts on RCTV Available for Comment



PRESS ADVISORY
May 26, 2007

Contact: Megan Morrissey
202-347-8081 x602
media@veninfo.org

Experts on RCTV Available for Comment

This Sunday, May 27th, marks the end of RCTV's right to broadcast on the public airwaves in Venezuela. The government's decision not to renew the broadcasting license of RCTV has caused much controversy regarding press freedoms in Venezuela. RCTV is Venezuela's oldest private broadcaster, but also the nation's most often cited for legal infractions, and previous offenses committed under other presidential administrations have led to repeated closures and fines. In 2002, RCTV actively supported a coup against President Chavez by encouraging citizens to overthrow the democratically elected president.

As the May 27th deadline approaches, a heightened debate is taking place about press freedoms in Venezuela and the role of the media in the political life of the country. Below is a list of experts who may be consulted.

EXPERTS ON VENEZUELA AND THE MEDIA:

Steve Ellner, Professor of Economic History at the Universidad del Oriente.
In Venezuela: 02812748145 / 0416-4800900

Dr. Ellner is a prolific writer and trusted commentator on Venezuelan politics, economics, and labor issues. He co-edited *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era: Class, Polarization & Conflict* (Lynne Reinner, 2003).

Steve Rendall, Senior Analyst, Fairness and Accuracy in the Media (FAIR).
In New York: 212-633-6700 x307 / 347-573-6812

Rendall is an analyst with FAIR, a national media watch group that has been offering well-documented criticism of media bias and censorship since 1986. FAIR advocates for greater diversity in the press and scrutinizes a wide range of media practices.

Julia Buxton, Professor in the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford.
In the UK: +44 (0)1274 233208 / 07961418782

An expert on Venezuela, Dr. Buxton is widely consulted on matters such as political parties, democracy, and conflict resolution. She is the author of *The Failure of Political Reform in Venezuela* (Ashgate, 2001).

9/18/2007

Mark Weisbrot, Co-director, Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).

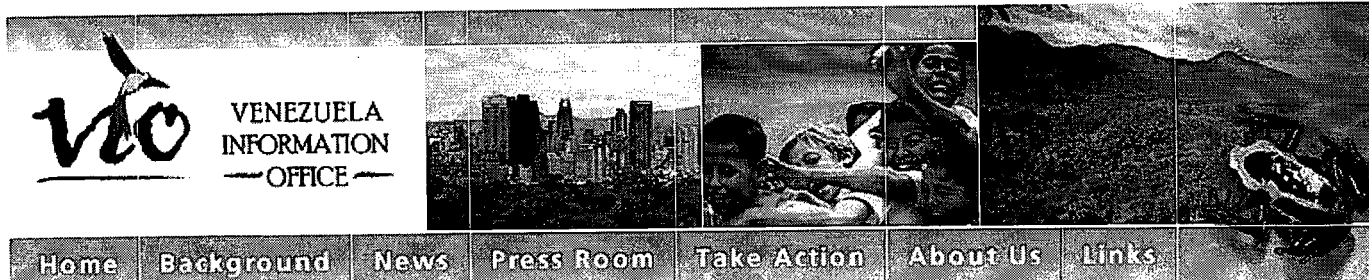
In Washington, DC: 202-293-5380 x122 / 202-746-7264

Weisbrot holds a Ph.D. in economics, and is a frequent commentator on Latin American issues for the *Washington Post*, *L.A. Times* and *Boston Globe* as well as CNN, PBS and other networks. His studies on Venezuela include "Poverty Rates in Venezuela: Getting the Numbers Right," (CEPR 2006).

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 28, 2007

Contact: Olivia Goubri, Venezuela Information Office, 202-347-8081 x601

Venezuela's First Public Broadcasting Station Begins

Today, May 28, marks the end of RCTV's right to broadcast on Ch. 2 in Venezuela. In its place is Venezuela's first ever public broadcasting station: TVes. The government's decision not to renew the broadcasting license of RCTV has raised questions about press freedoms in Venezuela, but the government contends that its non-renewal was based on the station's implicit involvement in a short lived coup against Chavez in 2002.

As protests against the non-renewal and celebration rallies in support of it graced the landscape of the country this weekend, a heightened debate has begun about public television that takes into account the interests of the public good. TVes is similar to some European stations as well as the American PBS. It received an initial investment of \$4 million from the government and has an independent board of supervisors. However, in October TVes will hold a meeting with businesses and companies to offer the possibility of corporate advertising space in order to diversify its funding.

Lil Rodriguez, chairwoman of TVes, said in a press conference last week that the TV station would be one that promotes diversity, a plurality of culture and views, and a place for local and undiscovered talent to be showcased. In an effort to further utilize independent producers and artists the station will not produce content, but instead will buy productions. Educational programming for children will also be an important aspect of TVes.

While currently the station only broadcasts to the Caracas metro area, under existing legislation it has three months to expand its broadcast nationally. The station also hopes to reach into some of the most remote areas of the nation, not covered before by RCTV. Currently TVes airs for 7 hours but shortly will begin 24 hour programming.

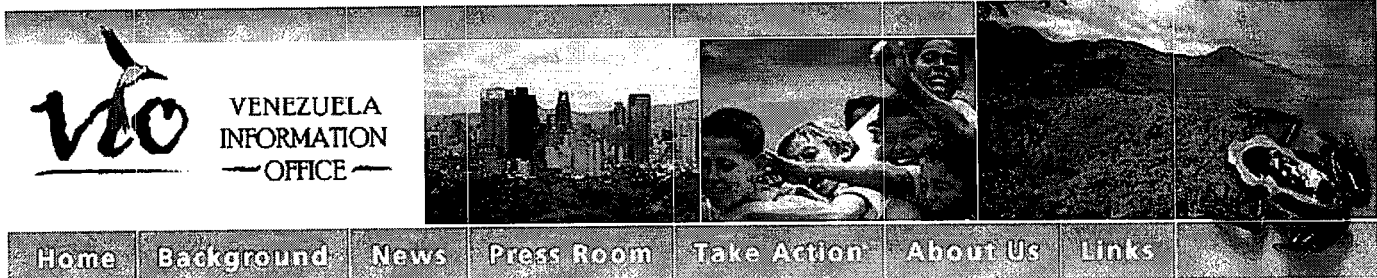
For more information on programming and TVes see the station's website at: <http://www.tv.es.org.ve/>

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Back >>>

NOTE: The Venezuela Information Office is dedicated to informing the American public about contemporary Venezuela, and receives its funding from the government of Venezuela. More information is available from the FARA office of the Department of Justice in Washington DC.

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 15, 2007

Contact: Olivia Goubri, Venezuela Information Office, 202-347-8081 x601

U.S. Unresponsive For 2 Years as Venezuela Seeks Extradition of Terrorist Posada Carriles

Today, June 15th, marks the two year anniversary of Venezuela's extradition request for Luis Posada Carriles, who is wanted for terrorist acts including the murders of 73 innocent victims of a deadly airline bombing in 1976. Posada Carriles is a citizen of Venezuela, where he escaped from jail in 1985 while awaiting trial for the bombing. The U.S. has yet to respond to Venezuela's extradition request, despite binding treaty agreements that require it to do so and an official renewal of its request filed yesterday by the Venezuelans.

Venezuela filed a formal extradition request with the U.S. State Department on June 15, 2005, providing voluminous documentary evidence of Posada Carriles' criminal past. The case was referred to the Department of Justice, but never presented before a federal district court as is required by law. This has raised questions about inconsistencies in the U.S. "war on terror."

Posada Carriles entered the U.S. illegally and resided in Miami for months before being detained by the U.S. Immigration, Customs and Enforcement Agency (ICE). By failing to deport Posada Carriles, ICE set a precedent revealing the U.S. government's lenient stance on Posada even before his immigration trial had begun. Charges of immigration fraud brought against Posada Carriles were dropped two days before a trial that was set for May 11, 2007. Texas Judge Kathleen Cardone dismissed the charges in response to claims made by his lawyers that the U.S. government had used "deceit" and "trickery" in the case.

Immigration charges against Posada Carriles are the most recent in a long history of legal violations by the anti-Castro militant and former CIA operative. Earlier this week, U.S. federal prosecutors appealed Judge Cardone's ruling, giving new hope to those who wish to see the notorious criminal brought to justice. However, many have expressed concern about the delays in trying Posada Carriles, and have argued that charges of immigration fraud show that the U.S. has taken insufficient action against a known terrorist.

Venezuela's Ambassador to the White House Bernardo Alvarez has stated that, "Should Posada be allowed to escape justice for his vicious crimes, it will send a powerful message to the international community that some terrorism is acceptable. It isn't."

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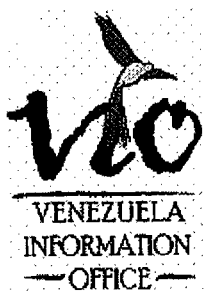
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Megan Morrissey

From: Megan Morrissey [media@veninfo.org]
Sent: Tuesday, July 03, 2007 2:54 PM
To: 'media@veninfo.org'
Subject: Venezuelan Ambassador in Houston - Press Advisory



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 July 3, 2007

CONTACT: OLIVIA GOUMBRI
 (301) 613-4767

Houston to Host Ambassador of Venezuela on Diplomatic Tour

Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States Bernardo Álvarez will visit Houston on July 10th and 11th to speak with elected officials including city council members and state delegates, as well as local community leaders. Ambassador Álvarez will be in Houston as part of a larger Texas tour which is aimed at renewing historic energy ties between Venezuela and Texas and creating new relationships in social and cultural arenas.

Two events in Houston featuring the Venezuelan Ambassador are listed below. Press are invited to attend.

- Wednesday, July 11th at 2 PM: Reception of Ambassador Álvarez at Houston's City Hall, hosted by City Councilwoman Ada Edwards. Followed by a tour of Houston communities to discuss local issues and initiatives. Location: City Hall, 901 Bagby St. in Houston.
- Tuesday, July 10th at 7 PM: A Discussion with Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez, followed by a concert by Afro-Venezuelan women's musical ensemble Elegguá. Location: Shrine of the Black Madonna Church, 5317 Martin Luther King Blvd. in Houston.

Bernardo Álvarez became Ambassador of Venezuela to the United States in January of 2003. His previous positions include Vice Minister of Hydrocarbons at the Ministry of Energy and Mines, Deputy to the National Congress, Vice Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee and Chairman of the Energy and Mines Committee. In the international area, he has held positions as Representative of Venezuela and Member of the Executive Committee to the U.S. Energy Council, Principal Coordinator for Venezuela in the Cooperation Agreement on Energy with the United States, and Head of the Venezuelan Delegation to the Ministerial Conferences of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Ambassador Álvarez has taught at the School of Political and Administrative studies of the Universidad Central de Venezuela and at the Superior School of the Venezuelan Air Force, and served as Academic Advisor at the Institute of Higher Studies on National Defense. Ambassador Álvarez holds a degree in Political Science from the Universidad Central de Venezuela and a Masters degree in Development Studies from the University of Sussex, England.

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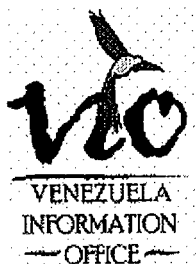
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Megan Morrissey

From: Megan Morrissey [media@veninfo.org]
Sent: Tuesday, July 03, 2007 2:57 PM
To: 'media@veninfo.org'
Subject: Venezuelan Ambassador in San Antonio - Press Advisory

277 SEP 20 PM 4:33
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 July 3, 2007

CONTACT: OLIVIA GOUMBRI
 (301) 613-4767

San Antonio to Host Ambassador of Venezuela on Diplomatic Tour

Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States Bernardo Álvarez will visit San Antonio on July 9th and 10th to meet with local public officials and community leaders. Ambassador Álvarez will be in San Antonio as part of a larger Texas tour which is aimed at renewing historic energy ties between Venezuela and Texas and creating new relationships in social and cultural arenas.

Two events in San Antonio featuring the Venezuelan Ambassador are listed below. Press are welcome to attend the events, which are open to the public and expected to draw crowds.

- Monday, July 9th at 7 PM: Remarks by Ambassador Álvarez following a free performance by Afro-Venezuelan women's musical ensemble Elegguá. Location: Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, 1300 Guadalupe Street.
- Tuesday, July 10th, 8-10 AM: Leaders' Breakfast Meeting with Ambassador Álvarez, followed by a dialogue and discussion on voting and immigration. Co-hosted by the William C. Velasquez Institute and the Southwest Voters Registration Project. Location: Ruta Maya, 107 E. Martin Street.

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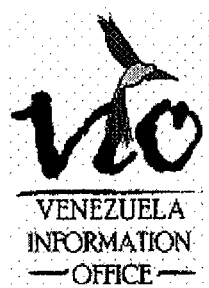
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Megan Morrissey

From: Megan Morrissey [media@veninfo.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 05, 2007 11:31 AM
To: 'media@veninfo.org'
Subject: Interviews Available with Venezuelan Ambassador in San Antonio



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 July 5, 2007

CONTACT: OLIVIA GOUMBRI
 (301) 613-4767

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Interviews with Ambassador Álvarez may be scheduled by calling Olivia Gombri: 301-613-4767.

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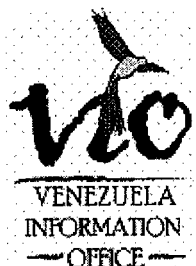
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Megan Morrissey

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To: 'media@veninfo.org'
Subject: Interview Available with Venezuelan Ambassador in Houston



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 July 5, 2007

CONTACT: OLIVIA GOUMBRI
 (301) 613-4767

Houston to Host Ambassador of Venezuela on Diplomatic Tour

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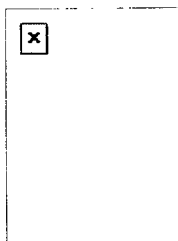
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Megan Morrissey

From: Megan Morrissey [media@veninfo.org]
Sent: Monday, July 09, 2007 9:40 AM
To: 'media@veninfo.org'
Subject: Venezuelan Ambassador Visiting Houston



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 July 9, 2007

CONTACT: OLIVIA GOUMBRI
 (301) 613-4767

Houston to Host Ambassador of Venezuela on Diplomatic Tour

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- Wednesday, July 11th Visit to St. John's United Methodist Church's Homeless Recovery with Pastor Rudy Rasmus. Location: corner of Crawford and Gray in downtown Houston.
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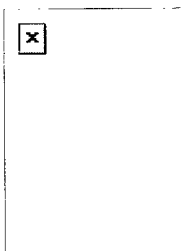
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9/18/2007

Megan Morrissey

From: Megan Morrissey [media@veninfo.org]
Sent: Monday, July 09, 2007 9:29 AM
To: 'media@veninfo.org'
Subject: Today: Interview the Venezuelan Ambassador in San Antonio



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 July 9, 2007

CONTACT: OLIVIA GOUMBRI
 (301) 613-4767

San Antonio to Host Ambassador of Venezuela on Diplomatic Tour

Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States Bernardo Álvarez will visit San Antonio on July 9th and 10th to meet with local public officials and community leaders. Ambassador Álvarez will be in San Antonio as part of a larger Texas tour which is aimed at renewing historic energy ties between Venezuela and Texas and creating new relationships in social and cultural arenas.

Interviews with Ambassador Álvarez on Monday, July 9th may be scheduled by calling Olivia Gombri: 301-613-4767.

Two events in San Antonio featuring the Venezuelan Ambassador are listed below. Press are welcome to attend the events, which are open to the public and expected to draw crowds.

- Monday, July 9th at 7 PM: Remarks by Ambassador Álvarez following a free performance by Afro-Venezuelan women's musical ensemble Elegguá. Location: Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, 1300 Guadalupe Street.
- Tuesday, July 10th, 8-10 AM: Leaders' Press Breakfast Meeting with Ambassador Álvarez, followed by a dialogue and discussion on voting and immigration. Co-hosted by the William C. Velasquez Institute and the Southwest Voters Registration Project. Location: Ruta Maya, 107 E. Martin Street.

Bernardo Álvarez became Ambassador of Venezuela to the United States in January of 2003. His previous positions include Vice Minister of Hydrocarbons at the Ministry of Energy and Mines, Deputy to the National Congress, Vice Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee and Chairman of the Energy and Mines Committee. In the international area, he has held positions as Representative of Venezuela and Member of the Executive Committee to the U.S. Energy Council, Principal Coordinator for Venezuela in the Cooperation Agreement on Energy with the United States, and Head of the Venezuelan Delegation to the Ministerial Conferences of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Ambassador Álvarez has taught at the School of Political and Administrative studies of the Universidad Central de Venezuela and at the Superior School of the Venezuelan Air Force, and served as Academic Advisor at the Institute of Higher Studies on National Defense. Ambassador Álvarez holds a degree in Political Science from the Universidad Central de Venezuela and a

Masters degree in Development Studies from the University of Sussex, England.

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Home > This week > Our Readers Write

Our Readers Write

Terone Ward

WEDNESDAY, 30 MAY 2007

Democratizing media access in Venezuela

Dear Editor,

In the media, things change frequently: programming, audience, ownership, editorial stance. At home, we are often faced with such developments – for example, the recent cancellation of Don Imus' long-running morning radio program. We understand and accept them as part and parcel of the fluctuating currents of the information age. Why, when similar shifts occur in the media in other countries, are we so quick to label them censorship?

This is exactly what has happened in response to a recent decision made by the Venezuelan government not to renew the broadcasting license of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV). The 20-year license granted to the station, Venezuela's oldest and most cited for legal infractions, expired on May 27. Instead of being given a new tenure on the public airwaves, RCTV will be required to operate through other venues such as satellite or cable TV.

Before you decide whether or not this counts as censorship, try to imagine a mainstream news channel in the U.S. encouraging the public to overthrow our elected president, then advocating sabotage that dealt a severe blow to the domestic economy. This is what RCTV did in 2002 and 2003 when it supported a military coup against Chavez and promoted the stoppage of oil production. Inciting political violence and conducting news blackouts is unacceptable behavior from the media in any country.

Why, then, has RCTV's non-renewal been the subject of criticism? There are two reasons. First, because the station's owner, Marcel Granier, is an influential member of Caracas' small wealthy elite and consistently one of President Chavez's most vocal critics. Granier controls about 40 percent of the Venezuelan media, and his influence likely greased the wheels in a case brought by RCTV against the Venezuelan government at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The second reason is that, as a news story, censorship sells. Much noise was made when the Organization of American States began examining the RCTV issue, but no U.S. mainstream media reported on their subsequent show of support for the Venezuelan government in its decision not to renew licensing to the notorious broadcaster. The press would rather report on condemnation and criticism than on agreement, a fact which lends credence to negative evaluations of the government's treatment of RCTV.

In the U.S., the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) makes decisions regarding the licensing of broadcasters. As in Venezuela, that agency has the power to grant broadcasting rights to any outlet, and to deny those rights to broadcasters that do not comply with legal guidelines. Surprisingly absent from debates around RCTV is the fact that our own FCC has closed three TV stations due to legal infractions since 1969: WLBT-TV in Mississippi, CBS affiliate WLNS-TV in Michigan and Trinity Broadcasting in Miami.

In Venezuela, the National Telecommunications Commission formed under the Chavez administration has to date avoided carrying out closures or non-renewals. It does not seek to silence opposition voices, but rather to foster a diversity of viewpoints in the media by providing alternatives to the privately-owned, opposition-affiliated channels that currently comprise over 90 percent of the Venezuelan media. The process is known as the "democratization of the media," and it does not stop there. The National Telecommunications Commission will allot RCTV's vacated share of the broadcast spectrum to public television programming, a sort of Venezuelan PBS. It will also install eight indigenous community radio stations in the Venezuelan Amazon region next October.

Changes democratizing access to the representation of diverse communities in the media are long overdue. Critics of the RCTV non-renewal who condemn these much-needed changes prefer to cry censorship than to consider the context in which they occur.

Olivia B. Gombri, Executive Director, Venezuela Information Office, olivia@veninfo.org



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Washington Hispanic

Junio 1, 2007

El derecho del Estado a la no renovación de concesión

Por Natali Fani

En la madrugada del lunes 28 de mayo surge en Venezuela el primer canal de servicio público con señal abierta en donde el pueblo es el principal protagonista de su programación. TVes - Televisora Venezolana Social - salió al aire a través de las frecuencias del canal 2, la cual fue ocupada por la empresa Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV) y cuya concesión terminó el pasado 27 de mayo.

TVes - ofrece diferentes géneros de programas para todas las audiencias y le otorga a productores nacionales independientes venezolanos y a los medios alternativos y comunitarios la oportunidad de difundir su programación, creando así un medio que da cabida al talento popular por medio de la diversidad y la pluralidad.

Con el vencimiento de la concesión a RCTV comienza a debilitarse en Venezuela la dictadura de los monopolios mediáticos. RCTV, quien junto a otro canal privado en Venezuela controlaba los ingresos del 70% de los medios de televisión en el país, fue uno de los principales representantes de la oligarquía privada que participó en el golpe de estado de abril de 2002. Su participación fue tan activa que los magnates de los monopolios privados –entre ellos Marcel Granier, propietario de RCTV– anunciaron que podían garantizarle al gobierno golpista el apoyo de los medios. Un apoyo que resultó en incentivar a la población a participar en un golpe en contra de un gobierno democrático. Al ver su fracaso, la directiva de RCTV decidió mostrar dibujos animados y novelas, incumpliendo así su deber de anunciar que el pueblo de Venezuela marchaba en las calles pacíficamente por el regreso de su Presidente Hugo Chávez, quien fue reelegido democráticamente el pasado diciembre de 2006 con 63% de los votos.

A pesar de este grave acontecimiento, y del sabotaje económico que ocurrió entre el 2002-2003 apoyado por RCTV, el gobierno de Venezuela nunca cerró ni censuró al canal de RCTV. En Venezuela ningún periodista ha sido arrestado o castigado por ejercer su trabajo. La constitución de la Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela de 1999 reafirma la libertad de expresión, la libertad de prensa y la libertad de información como libertades fundamentales que deben ser protegidas por el gobierno.

RCTV también se distinguió por ser el medio televisivo con el mayor número de multas, la cuales fueron otorgadas por gobiernos previos al del Presidente Chávez. Dichas multas incluyen el cierre del canal por tres días por difundir noticias falsas y tendenciosas y el cierre por 24 horas por exponer escenas pornográficas. Aparte, RCTV tiene aún un caso en la Tribunal Contencioso Tributario por haber evadido impuestos en los últimos tres años.

Como casi en todos los países, incluyendo en Estados Unidos, en Venezuela el espectro radioeléctrico es un recurso limitado que es regulado por el gobierno para promover el interés público, ya que es una propiedad pública, y debe ser regulado para garantizar las necesidades de los ciudadanos. Conjuntamente, la Unión Internacional de Telecomunicaciones reconoce “en toda su amplitud el derecho soberano de cada Estado a reglamentar sus telecomunicaciones, teniendo en cuenta la importancia creciente de las telecomunicaciones para la salvaguardia de la paz y el desarrollo económico y social de los Estados...”. Es decir, el Estado venezolano como administrador del Espectro Radioeléctrico tiene potestad de decidir cuando renovar o no una concesión.

El caso de RCTV, así como lo ha confirmado la Unión Europea, no es un caso de violación a derechos de libertad de expresión. El gobierno de Venezuela ejerció su derecho legal de no renovar una concesión de televisión. RCTV no se cierra, ni se viola su derecho a la libertad de expresión ya que puede seguir transmitiendo a través de sus dos emisoras (92.9 FM y RCR AM) y por los servicios de cable.

Otros gobiernos en Latinoamérica han hecho lo mismo recientemente, pero por motivos políticos esa realidad no ha sido explotada mediáticamente como lo han hecho con Venezuela. Por ejemplo, en abril de 2007 el gobierno de Perú no renovó la licencia de 2 canales televisivos y 3 radiales por incumplir la Ley de Radio y Televisión, licencias vencidas y utilización de equipos no homologados. En Diciembre 2006 Uruguay revocó los permisos a emisoras de radio 94.5 FM y Concierto FM en Montevideo; además, Uruguay revocó una resolución que ampliaba la cobertura de la señal de cable Multicanal, perteneciente al grupo Clarín. En el 2003, el gobierno de El Salvador revocó la concesión a Salvador Network.

Tanto en Venezuela como en cualquier otro país del mundo, el Estado administra el espectro radioeléctrico en función de lo que considera mejor para la sociedad. El caso RCTV sin duda alguna muestra el poder de la oligarquía mediática y el trato desigual hacia gobiernos que tienen una verdadera misión de representar la diversidad de sus pueblos.

Natali del Carmen Fani es Vice-Directora de la Oficina de Información de Venezuela en Washington, D.C. Ella puede ser contactada a través del 202 347 8081, ext. 603.
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Editor's Picks

★ Re: Revolution in Venezuela? by Joaquín Villalobos

06/27/2007 @ 12:20pm

Joaquín Villalobos condemns President Chávez on the grounds that the three times elected leader is less revolutionary than he claims to be, dismissing changes in Venezuela as inauthentic because they have lacked violence and austerity. The article demonstrates an uninformed eagerness to discredit the government that does not deserve to be taken seriously by progressives.

Poverty in Venezuela has fallen by about 10 percent through policies including food subsidies and social missions in health and education. Contrary to Villalobos's claim, a pro-poor orientation was the key to Chávez's ascent as a young soldier and remains a cornerstone of his popularity today.

The non-renewal of RCTV may tug at the cultural common ground of Venezuelans, but it is far from "as bad as leaving them without food," because culture simply cannot be revoked. It is constantly being renovated, and changes bring opportunity. Villalobos is narrow-minded to assume that RCTV's lewd programming would count as an irreplaceable part of Venezuelan national identity.

Just as culture is a dynamic process in which citizens are actively involved, so is politics, and the coordinates of revolution have changed since Villalobos's day. Venezuela's 21st Century Socialism provides an alternative to the status quo without bloodshed or repression. In this sense, it resembles the Zapatista movement in Mexico, a peaceful push for democratic pluralism and indigenous rights. In the face of rampant global poverty and inequality, the fight against social, political and economic exclusion has become a revolutionary cause.

As a student of politics, Villalobos should know that socialism, like any model of government, is in practice expected to deviate from its textbook definition. If Chávez's policies indeed "change some rules of the game" in Venezuela without fitting neatly into

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MOST ACTIVE

Revolution in Venezuela?

June 21, 2007 | 24 Web Letters

JOAQUÍN VILLALOBOS | Oil money allows Hugo Chávez to do many things, but it will never be enough to buy a revolution.

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BARBARA EHRENREICH | A closer look at Hillary Clinton's career reveals a technocratic centrist whose political ambition might trump any progressive policy promises.

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June 18, 2007 | 3 Web Letters

JEREMY BRECHER & BRENDAN SMITH | A new Iraq Moratorium effort will leverage grassroots and online activism.

categories like "socialism" or "revolution," then perhaps the failure lies instead with Villalobos's arrogant application of outmoded political theory.

Megan Morrissey
Venezuela Information Office
Washington, DC

★ **Re: Revolution in Venezuela? by Joaquín Villalobos**

06/26/2007 @ 2:11pm

Villalobos's comments on developments in Venezuela are based on a classic yet outmoded model of revolution that ignores the profound transformation currently underway in Venezuelan society.

The absence of revolutionary violence and rapid change do not preclude the existence of revolutionary processes. Revolution is more properly understood as a radical reconfiguration of social power. Such a process is already well under way, inasmuch as the Bolivarian Revolution aims to build socialist hegemony within civil society by peaceful means. As such, the Bolivarian model represents a sharp break with "vanguardist" models of revolutionary theory and practice.

This is a gradual yet profound transformation saturated by political struggle. The movement towards democratic socialism is given powerful impetus by the intervention of state power. Such interventions are salutary because inasmuch as grassroots mobilization is not always sufficient to break the hold of the old order. The denial of the broadcast license is but a small episode in a larger struggle.

Let's keep the big picture in mind and above all not forget that Chávez is carrying out a democratic mandate.

Marc Stivers
Philadelphia, PA

★ **Re: Revolution in Venezuela? by Joaquín Villalobos**

06/25/2007 @ 10:48pm

As long-time readers of *The Nation* and as organizers of several delegations to "revolutionary" Venezuela, we were shocked and dismayed to see you print the pathetic article by Joaquín Villalobos. It says more about the frayed mind of this former guerrilla turned apologist for the system than it does about any on-the-ground reality in Venezuela. Perhaps this is why Chávez wisely decided to distance himself from those former sectarian leftists in his own country whose years in armed clandestinity had isolated them from the world of complexity, from the lives of ordinary Venezuelans and from the necessity to navigate a national and international political minefield that requires constant vigilance

High-Tech Hysteria

June 15, 2007 | 2 Web Letters

ELIZABETH SCHUSTER & MICHELLE CHANDRA |

Alarmist predictions of a talent shortage of high-tech workers are driving the race to the bottom.

For Liberal Internationalism

June 14, 2007 | 2 Web Letters

MICHAEL LIND | Now that neoconservative policies have led us into disaster, it's time to give liberal internationalism a chance.

A Call to Bring All Troops Home

June 24, 2007 | 1 Web Letter

TOM HAYDEN | The Center for American Progress is calling to bring all combat forces--including trainers--home from Iraq.

Eyeless in Gaza

June 21, 2007 | 1 Web Letter

The disaster in Gaza has many fathers, but its most direct cause was the Bush Administration's cynical manipulation of democracy promotion.

Digby Speaks: The Netroots Revolution

June 20, 2007 | 1 Web Letter

DIGBY | The pseudonymous Southern California blogger accepts the Paul Wellstone Citizen Leadership Award on behalf of progressive bloggers everywhere--and invites the nation to join the party.

Corrupt Colleges, Student Debt

June 18, 2007 | 1 Web Letter

NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN | Corrupt college administrators have sold out students and buried them in a mountain of debt.

Persian Ghosts

June 14, 2007 | 1 Web Letter

CHRIS TOENSING | The complex historical tensions between Sunnis and Shiites are not enough to explain the current crisis in the Middle East.

Megan Morrissey

From: Arelis Paiva [apaiva@embavenez-us.org]
Sent: Friday, July 20, 2007 9:30 AM
To: embajador@embavenez-us.org
Subject: Houston Chronicle/Letters/Soured relationship

Houston Chronicle

July 18, 2007, 10:41PM

Letters

On Venezuelan energy

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Soured relationship

I was dismayed by the July 16 Chronicle editorial's use of sweeping generalizations rather than factual evidence [see "Respect / It has to be a two-way street between the United States under Bush and Venezuela under Chavez"].

To begin with, Venezuela and its democratically elected president, Hugo Chavez, are portrayed as the sole cause of strained relations with Washington.

While this political tit for tat between the two nations is certainly not a secret and assigns responsibility to both parties, the key reasons behind it are completely overlooked.

In 2002, a *coup d'état* was carried out against President Chavez. Immediately after, the United States (and the only country in the hemisphere to do so) recognized the illegitimate interim government and called for others to support it. Two days later, when Chavez was brought back to power by a massive outpouring of public support, relations with Washington began to sour.

Not only did the editorial get the context wrong, but it also characterized the present revenue-sharing agreements signed with foreign oil companies as "seizures," while claiming that contracts with U.S. companies are not being respected.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

During the partial nationalization process, all domestic and foreign companies have been compensated fairly.

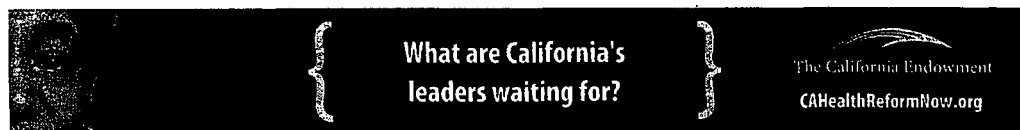
This may be why so many companies, including Chevron, have chosen to stay in Venezuela, agreeing to new contract terms giving Venezuela a majority share of the revenues produced in its joint oil projects.

While this may not be the preferred practice of Washington, it is a far cry from expropriation and seizures.

OLIVIA GOUMBRI

executive director, Venezuela Information Office, Washington, D.C.

8/13/2007



SEARCH

12:50 PM PDT, August 13, 2007

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Opinion : Letters

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Letters to the editor
August 13 2007

Page 2 of 3

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Pro-poor, not anti-U.S.

Re "Chavez brings oil diplomacy to neighbors," Aug. 8

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez may be trying to win friendships, as all governments do in their diplomatic relations, but he is doing so in the context of a deeper commitment to alleviating poverty in Latin America.

This humanistic undertaking is on display in Venezuela, where poverty has fallen under Chavez, and it is the underlying intent of regional integration projects spearheaded by Venezuela, such as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas. This project aims to reduce inequalities and raise the standard of living in the hemisphere.

A recent donation of \$3.3 million to community organizations in New York's South Bronx by the Venezuelan-owned gas company Citgo is a testament to that broader effort. A tour of the region by Chavez may highlight his desire to create alliances for Venezuela, but the tour is pro-poor, not anti-U.S.

Megan Morrissey Media Analyst, Venezuela Information Office
Washington

The GOP's budget error

Re "Gov.'s agenda stuck in standoff," Aug. 9

Republicans need to be rebuffed. Why should the poor and disabled suffer further cuts so that businesses should get more tax cuts? I refer to the \$1.3-billion cut to the poor and disabled in the budget, and the offer of \$1 billion in tax cuts to businesses just to have their Republican highnesses pass the budget.

Enough is enough!

Raquel Brac Redlands

Re "GOP bottom line," editorial, Aug. 10

Instead of addressing their disputes with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, state Republicans are holding the budget hostage to misplaced anger over Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown.

I support Brown's fight to enforce the California Environmental Quality Act by requiring local governments to show that their growth plans will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Schwarzenegger has made our state a leader in the fight against climate change, and I implore him to support Brown's position in this extremely important matter.

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PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Venezuelan protest

Thursday, August 16, 2007

In the Trib's recent editorial on Venezuela you suggest that a separation of powers and public dissent no longer exist in Venezuela ("The truth hurts," Aug. 9 and PghTrib.com).

You are absolutely wrong.

Just recently Venezuela's Supreme Court ruled against the government, allowing an opposition television station to continue broadcasting through cable, and for most of the summer student protests in support of that station graced the landscape.

Moreover, if you read any of the major newspapers in the country or turned on the TV, you would find public criticism of the government alive and well.

Your reference to Venezuela's military purchases also needs to be based in fact. For if you had used it, you would know that most purchases have been for combatting narco-trafficking along the border with Colombia and not for offensive purposes, as you suggest.

*Olivia Goumbri
Washington, D.C.*

The writer is the executive director of the Venezuela Information Office.

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OPINION Letters

Letters: Free for all

09:02 AM CDT on Sunday, August 19, 2007

Firm must be held accountable

Re: "15 exposed to facility show signs of illnesses," Wednesday Metro.

Parkland Hospital's screening for asbestos-related disease drew more than 500 former employees and neighbors of the W.R. Grace Vermiculite Plant that operated in West Dallas until 1992. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of the people tested showed signs of disease.

W.R. Grace knew by 1936 that asbestos dust was "definitely harmful." By the 1950s, the company knew specifically that its vermiculite contained dangerous asbestos. But W.R. Grace chose to protect its secret and profits, rather than its workers and neighbors.

West Dallas residents need information and medical support to deal with W.R. Grace's legacy of secrecy and disease. And W.R. Grace must be held accountable for its decisions.

Russell W. Budd, Dallas

New rating for pre-schools

The Texas State Center for Early Childhood Development is announcing a new voluntary ratings system of sorts for preschools. This month, programs will begin receiving special certifications – proof parents can look for that the classrooms are effectively preparing their children for kindergarten.

Similar to national Blue Ribbon School certifications for elementary and secondary schools, the "School Ready" awards will be presented to more than 450 public pre-K, Head Start and child care center classrooms across Texas, including 19 in Dallas. This is a great step toward focusing resources and attention on our youngest learners, but we need to do better.

Dallas is known as a leader in the corporate world, sports, medical research and fine arts. Let's work together to become equally well known and valued for our investment in our youngest citizens.

Their future lies in our hands and eventually ours will be in theirs.

Susan Hoff, president and CEO, ChildCareGroup, Dallas

Hey, where's that bonus?

Re: "Army aims to sweeten incentives for recruits," Aug. 10 news story.

My granddaughter enlisted in the National Guard almost two years ago with the same incentive promise of \$20,000 for enlisting, with a promise of half after completing her advanced training and the balance after two years.

She has completed her advanced training and has been in the Army for almost two years. There is not even a hint of her receiving any of her bonus money. When she asks her next-in-command, she is told, "It's in the works."

So much for the sweetening.

Donald Smith, Cedar Hill

White females run state PTA

I have been on Dallas Council longer than 10 years. I have attended the Summer Leadership Seminar, state PTA Convention and national convention.

I can do PTA in my sleep. However, when I awaken, I continue to see the same Anglo-female leadership year after year after year. Ask the state PTA to give you a list of past presidents and vice presidents, and tell me what the makeup has been for the past 30 years.

Am I color-blind or is it the state PTA?

Linda M. Wynn, Dallas Council PTA president 2006-07, Dallas

Venezuela no terrorist friend

Re: "Friends of Our Enemies – We can't ignore Iran's Latin America overtures," Aug. 12 Editorials.

I must correct your statement that "Hezbollah now openly operates in Caracas," the capital of Venezuela.

Your statement implies that the government of Venezuela would tolerate – even support – terrorism, when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. Under President Hugo Chávez, the government has upped its commitment to fighting terrorism by policing the border with Colombia. It has offered assistance in mediating a long conflict between guerrillas and paramilitaries, even handing over well-known actors to Colombia.

Venezuela also has requested extradition of known terrorist Luis Posada Carriles from the U.S. for two years so he might be tried for crimes, including a deadly airplane bombing in 1973.

However much your editorial team might dislike the leaders of the countries in question, it is unfair – and incorrect – to say Venezuela harbors terrorists.

Olivia Goumbri, executive director, Venezuela Information Office, Washington

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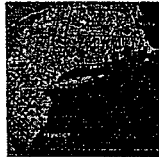
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I am one of those "old coots," referred to by Laurence D. Cohen, who drive to the Branford Regal theater on Route 1 to see the wonderful live Saturday afternoon broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera [Other Opinion, Aug. 17, "What's On The Menu When The Fat Lady Sings"]. This is the only theater in Connecticut presenting these sold-out performances, which feature world-famous singers, imaginative staging and well-explained subtitles.

I am happy Mr. Cohen has at least introduced the existence of these very entertaining productions, and he obviously has a knowledge of opera. Mr. Cohen, how about following up with a serious article giving us more information?

I have spoken to the manager of our Buckland theaters and he expressed interest in speaking with the manager in Branford for more information. Our theaters are not yet set up for these high-definition live broadcasts, but if enough people expressed interest to the manager, perhaps it would hasten the process. Until then I will continue to drive to Branford. It is worth every mile.

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Adele F. Allen
Vernon

More Spaying, Fewer Strays

In response to Ellen Sayers' Aug. 8 letter "Missing Cats Are Proof Enough":

Although there is no doubt that coyotes, foxes and fishers are predators, and some cats are their prey, perhaps the reason Ms. Sayers does not see strays in her neighborhood is that Connecticut leads the nation in addressing feline overpopulation.

The nonprofit TEAM (Tait's Every Animal Matters) Mobile Feline Unit has sterilized more than 103,000 domestic and feral cats; the state animal population control program has reduced the number of unwanted animals; and thousands of good Samaritans and veterinarians continue

to participate in low-cost spay/neuter programs throughout the state.

Wildlife can't take all the blame, but Connecticut residents can share some of the credit.

John Caltabiano

President

Tait's Every Animal Matters

Westbrook

Chavez Is Not A Dictator

The Aug. 17 editorial "Hugo Chavez For Life?" demonstrates a lack of understanding of Venezuelan issues.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is not a dictator, as The Courant implies - he has won three elections that were deemed free and fair by all international observers, including the Carter Center. The Courant seems to suggest that Venezuelans are unfit to choose a proper democratic leader, and yet Chavez has consistently had higher approval ratings than President Bush.

I have lived in Venezuela, and it is not "an autocratic system with minimal rights of free expression." Individuals hold any political viewpoint they choose, and anti-Chavez perspectives are omnipresent in the media. However, pro-government voices are sometimes censored - the head of the state oil company was just fined by the National

Columnists



Electoral Council for encouraging workers to vote for Chavez. The checks and balances of the democratic process remain firmly in place in Venezuela, and tolerance and transparency prevail.

The Courant misrepresents the new constitutional changes. No provisions would allow President Chavez to, as The Courant claims, "expropriate private property by decree." Nor will presidential powers go unchecked.

Megan Morrissey

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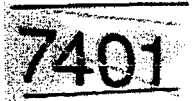
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2007 SEP 20 PM 4:24
COMMUNICATION UNIT

www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/letters/bal-ed.le.22aug22.0,557842.story

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Letters to the Editor

August 22, 2007

Slump in home sales may be boon for bay
Call me a contrarian, but two articles in Thursday's paper, "Dry spell means dry wells" (Aug. 16) and "Home sales slump in Md." (Aug. 16) convinced me that a slowdown in the housing market may not be such a terrible situation.

In fact, it may be a good thing in the long run if housing becomes less readily available.

Maryland is being overrun by the construction of strip malls and housing tracts and this cannot be good for the Chesapeake Bay watershed or, as the article on wells drying up indicates, for our water resources.

If the housing market tightens, I presume that the construction industry will curtail some of its building activity.

And perhaps the political leadership of Maryland's local jurisdictions and the state will see the wisdom of leaving what remains of our open space in a natural condition.

Our leaders might then also consider the idea that continued economic growth is not the only paradigm for a well-ordered society.

Indeed we all may have to begin to grapple with the idea that maintaining ecological and environmental stability is more important than maintaining the level of material comfort to which we have become accustomed.

Ours is a society which, for decades, has increasingly been about consumption.

But at some point, probably in the not-too-distant future, the practice of consuming the land and water resources around us is going to run smack into environmental realities.

We are reaching the limits of the population our area can support and those who say that there is such a thing as "sustainable growth" are fooling themselves.

Alan Gephardt
Baltimore

Build modest homes for slumping market

If the current housing market is slumping but the need for affordable housing is acute, then let me point



Reform in Venezuela will include public

The Sun's article "Chavez pitches reform in nation" (Aug. 16) correctly reported the proposed amendments to be debated in Venezuela's National Assembly in the coming months. However, the article hardly mentioned the procedures for reforming the nation's constitution.

As in the run-up to the plebiscite that approved Venezuela's 1999 constitution, the public will be involved throughout the whole process, from suggesting changes in the reform proposals to voting on the final draft of the constitution in a referendum.

This means the majority of Venezuelans must vote for the changes to the constitution for them to be approved.

And public involvement in the reform process is certain to be high, as Venezuela has impressive voter turnout rates (75 percent in the last presidential election) and one of the highest rates of voter registration in the hemisphere.

Venezuelan citizens also have the right to rescind any new laws passed by petitioning to hold a national referendum.

Indeed opponents of President Hugo Chavez prompted a referendum in 2004, when they tried unsuccessfully to remove the president in a recall election.

And let's not forget that Mr. Chavez himself approved the provision in the 1999 constitution that allowed the citizenry to try to recall him in the middle of his term.

This is a testament to Mr. Chavez's commitment to democratic politics, not evidence of a desire for lifelong power.

Olivia B. Goumbri
Washington

The writer is executive director of the Venezuela Information Office.

Hoarder of animals earned harsher fate

It's sad, indeed, that there will be no criminal conviction in the animal hoarding case of Donna Lee Bell ("Animal hoarder sent to hospital," Aug. 17).

Those poor, suffering animals she hoarded must have endured a fate far worse than the prospect of euthanasia Ms. Bell was so concerned about.

The animals who survived this nightmare may be slowly on the mend, thanks to responsible and loving caregivers.

But what the dead animals had to endure before their death was so horrible.

And what's to prevent this cycle of death from happening again?

Linda Larson
Ellicott City

Animals never get to make a choice

OrlandoSentinel.com

September 4, 2007

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OPINION READER VIEWS HUGO CHAVEZ CHANGES IN VENEZUELA**Not 'anti-American'**

September 2, 2007

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Sweepstakes

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is not "anti-American," as your Aug. 26 editorial, "Counter Chavez's Mischief," claims. Despite diplomatic clashes between our countries, Venezuela has donated millions of dollars in aid to the U.S. in the form of reduced-cost heating oil for the poor. In order to counter the influence of Chavez, whose three electoral victories are due to successful anti-poverty efforts, the U.S. must do something more humanitarian than push for more free trade in a region where neoliberalism has already failed.

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Reforms to the Venezuelan constitution proposed by Chavez, including the possibility of continual re-election, should not cause concern. Colombia is the largest recipient of U.S. military aid outside of the Middle East, and no one batted an eye when President Alvaro Uribe changed the constitution to permit his re-election. Unlike in Colombia, Venezuelans must approve the constitutional changes in a national referendum, and can oust the president at any time through a recall vote.

U.S. influence in Latin America depends on a demonstrated commitment to the people of the region — as history shows, the poor majority rarely benefit from free trade — and by taking democratically elected leaders there seriously. Free trade alone just isn't the answer.

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Megan Morrissey

Media Analyst

Venezuela Information Office

Washington, D.C.

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New Voices

NFW

New Voices — people in
their 20s and students in

Part IV: Internet Information

2007 SEP 20 PM 4:33
COMM/SEC/ADMINISTRATION UNIT

-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Jueves, 15 de Marzo de 2007 11:51 a.m.

Subject: VIO News & Action: STATE DEPT BEGINS ITS ANTI-VENEZUELA CAMPAIGN

STATE DEPARTMENT BEGINS ITS ANTI-VENEZUELA CAMPAIGN

The U.S. State Department released its annual Report on Human Rights Practices earlier this month along with its International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. Critics charge that the findings of both are based more on politics than objective analysis. As the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) warned two years ago when analyzing the State Department's human rights report, its credibility may be undermined because, in some cases, "the U.S. government's policy priorities are effecting the evaluation of the data." A press release issued last week by our office points out the inaccuracies in this year's report.

The State Department's 2007 Narcotics Control Strategy Report raises similar concerns because it finds fault with the narco-trafficking enforcement of Venezuela and Bolivia, two countries who have chosen a political and economic path independent of Washington, while praising the efforts of close U.S. allies Mexico and Colombia. The praise for Colombia's drug enforcement seems especially questionable given that Colombia is the world's primary producer of cocaine and South America's top producer of heroin in spite of the \$4.7 billion that the U.S. has spent in anti-drug efforts there since 2000. This raises serious questions about the credibility of the U.S. State Department's report and whether its findings are political rather than objective and informational. Current information on Venezuela's efforts to combat narco-trafficking and inconsistencies in the report can be read here.

In related news, Venezuela's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jorge Valero, spoke on behalf of Venezuela before the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) earlier this week. He highlighted Venezuela's achievements in the areas of literacy, poverty reduction, and social equality and asked the Council to acknowledge the importance of them when determining progress in the area of human rights. Valero also asked the UNHRC to prevent the politicization of its findings and remain loyal to the "universal principles" that guide and define its work. Venezuela's representative to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission at the Organization of American States also spoke last week before that body and accused the Commission of being "biased" in its reporting on Venezuela. More coverage of his statements can be read here.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

Every day, politicians make decisions that affect our lives. What's more, the decisions of U.S. policymakers affect the lives of those who live abroad. The people of Venezuela and the general international-community NEED YOU to hold our politicians accountable for their actions.

SET UP A MEETING WITH YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Meeting with your representative and senators at their local office is a very effective way to convey a message about the reality of Venezuela. Let them know that Venezuela is suffering from a serious amount of bias on the part of the Bush administration and the State Department and that you'd like them to advocate for fairness and accuracy when analyzing Venezuela. A

better understanding of the Venezuelan reality is direly needed among our public officials and you can help educate them with this recent report. Please visit our Face-To-Face section for more information or contact us directly at newsandaction@veninfo.org

ATTEND A TOWN HALL MEETING

Congress members have regular town hall meetings where they hope to hear from their constituents on the issues that concern them the most. The case of Venezuela is dear to many and should be brought to your members' attention. Ask them how they plan to improve relations with Venezuela. For a schedule of your members' town hall meetings and talking points contact the VIO at newsandaction@veninfo.org

INVITE A VENEZUELAN EXPERT TO SPEAK IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The biggest problem we face as a nation is our limited understanding of other nations and peoples. Americans know little about the rest of the world but you can help to change that. Experts at the VIO are on hand to participate in panels, university events, community meetings and more. Just let us know and we will send someone to you! Please contact the VIO at newsandaction@veninfo.org

However you choose to contribute please make us aware of your efforts at newsandaction@veninfo.org

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From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: 20 de abril de 2007 12:51 p.m.

Subject: VIO News & Action: STATE DEPT BEGINS ITS ANTI-VENEZUELA CAMPAIGN

Dear Friend of Venezuela,

TERRORIST GOES FREE, SETTLES IN MIAMI

"WITH A MISGUIDED decision upholding bail for Cuban-born terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans has done more than free a frail old man facing unremarkable immigration charges. It has exposed Washington to legitimate charges of hypocrisy in the war on terror." notes the Los Angeles Times in their editorial today.

Less than a week after the Court blocked self-proclaimed terrorist Luis Posada Carriles' release from jail, the Court changed its mind despite Justice Department efforts to prevent his release. In response to the Justice Department's argument that he constitutes a flight risk due to his escape from a Venezuelan jail in 1985, the court ordered Posada to be fitted with an ankle bracelet to track his whereabouts. He will remain under house arrest in Miami until his immigration trial begins on May 11. Many in Venezuela suspect the Justice Department's plea to keep him in jail was luke-warm at best. According to the New York Times, Posada Carriles is a former intelligence operative and United States Army officer who has been held since May 2005 for entering the United States illegally. Read the full story.

VENEZUELA CALLS FOR FAIRNESS IN CASE & IMMEDIATE EXTRADITION

Venezuela is currently requesting the extradition of Posada to stand trial for the 1973 bombing of a Cuban airplane that killed all on board, mostly young athletes. Venezuela accused the U.S. government yesterday of being an "accomplice" to a terrorist and restated that either he should be extradited to Venezuela or be tried in the U.S. for his terrorist activities.

Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro said Thursday "The government of the United States could have acted in this case and didn't want to... George Bush's government is an accomplice of this terrorist. It has protected him and today it has guaranteed his freedom, striking a blow against and mocking international law."

Interestingly, earlier this week Congressman Dennis Kucinich called for Posada's extradition in a letter he sent to Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. "The United States must cooperate with the global community to further the protection of our citizens from terrorists. Posada Carriles should be tried for his crimes and will be if extradited to Venezuela. Releasing Posada Carriles would be a grave mistake." Read his full letter [here](#).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

CALL OR VISIT YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

To set up a meeting or speak directly with your representative and senators call the Congressional switchboard at 202-224-3121. Tell them that we are sending the wrong message to the international community and that Posada should be extradited to Venezuela or tried for his terrorist activities but he should not be free on bail!

WRITE AN OPED FOR YOUR LOCAL PAPER

Much is misunderstood about the case of Posada Carriles, including his self-admitted terrorist activities that have killed and injured Americans, Cubans and many more throughout the hemisphere. As the Christian Science Monitor recently pointed out, "In 1998, he admitted to The New York Times that he organized a wave of bombings of Cuban hotels and nightclubs in an attempt to discourage tourism to the island. One of those bombings killed Fabio Di Celmo, an Italian businessman. " Read more about his laundry list of crimes.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Jueves, 03 de Mayo de 2007 02:16 p.m.

Subject: Vzla. Raises Minimum Wage - Freedom of the Press-Facts you can pass on to others

VENEZUELA RAISES THE MINIMUM WAGE & INCREASES OIL SHARES

On May 1, in a speech before thousands of Venezuelans, President Chavez announced new measures in honor of International Workers' Day. During his remarks, Chavez called for a 20% increase in the minimum wage as well as the recovery of 60% of the revenue shares in the Orinoco Belt oil projects. Not surprisingly, a recent poll found that two thirds of Venezuelans are happy with their president. View the [poll](#).

By partially nationalizing Orinoco Belt oil projects, the Venezuelan government will gain a majority share in four heavy oil projects in the region, thereby reducing the stakes of foreign private oil companies including ConocoPhillips, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Total, and BP. Oil is just one of three key sectors which are expected to see further state control in the coming months; other industries include telecommunications and electricity. For a detailed account of these reforms, read the [fact sheet](#).

The new revenue-sharing agreement in the oil sector (expected to be finalized by June 26th) allows private oil companies to retain 40% ownership over the oil concessions in question, while the state will increase its revenue shares to 60%. The companies will be compensated for all assets transferred to the Venezuelan government under the agreement.

Although most news articles have reported otherwise, most companies are expected to comply with the new terms to ensure future profits from Venezuela's lucrative oil industry. In fact, Venezuela lags behind many other oil-producing nations in the amount of sovereignty it exercises over its natural resources. Tim Padgett of Time Magazine takes a refreshing look at the phenomenon this week in his article, ["Chavez's Not-So-Radical Oil Move"](#).

VENEZUELA TO WITHDRAW FROM THE IMF

Economic sovereignty is also at stake in Venezuela's announcement this week that it will terminate its membership in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Venezuela repaid its debts to both financial institutions last month, and has pledged to fulfill the terms of outstanding global bonds after it leaves. Finance Minister Rodrigo Cabezas recently stated that "Venezuela guarantees the payment of its debt, both internal and external -- all the debt, all the short-, medium- and long-term issues."

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

Two major themes have appeared in the U.S. press on Venezuela this month: nationalizations and press freedoms. With both coming under increased scrutiny and often the subject of undue condemnation, you can help by reviewing the facts on each and passing what you learn on to others.

Become better informed on Venezuela's [Nationalization Plan](#) and [Press Freedoms](#) in Venezuela and the Case of RCTV.

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From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Viernes, 04 de Mayo de 2007 02:17 p.m.

Subject: Rhode Island - Venezuela Needs You!

Friends in Rhode Island,

With Venezuela's recent nationalizations a hot topic in the news, there is no better time than now to educate your elected officials on Venezuelan democracy and their current plans. Read a detailed [fact sheet](#) on this topic.

Reaching out to your local, state and national representatives is an effective way of shaping U.S. foreign policy on Venezuela and with your first hand experience of Venezuela (perhaps you have traveled there, have studied the country, or you are Venezuelan) you can speak with authority about what is really happening in the country.

The reality is that for the first time ever the majority are able to feed their children by buying low-cost food - now available to everyone - adults and children alike are returning to school to finish their education, and healthcare is now accessible in the poorest and most remote areas of the country. Here is detailed information on [Venezuela](#)

Contact your local and national policymakers and let them know that you care about U.S. policy in Venezuela.

Federal Level: Contact your legislators' district-offices (your two Senators and your Representative in the House) to set up a meeting on Venezuela's participatory democracy and encourage them to travel to Venezuela to see it for themselves. Simply click on the links below and find their local office numbers to schedule your first meeting.

Keep in mind that:

- [Senator Jack Reed](#) is a member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services.
- [Senator Sheldon Whitehouse](#) is a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, a very important committee that deals with international affairs.
- [Congressman Jim Langevin](#) is a member of the House Permanent Committee on Intelligence in the House.
- [Representative Patrick J. Kennedy](#) is a member of the Appropriations Committees, which deals with Education, Health, Human Services and Labor (he in particular could find very useful to learn about Venezuela's social missions)

Fact sheets relevant to all of their committees are available through the VIO, just let us know who you are meeting with at vio@veninfo.org or call us at 202 347 8081, ext 603 and we will send you what you need.

State/Local level: It is also very important to contact your state and local legislators to educate

them on Venezuela. A great contribution would be to encourage your state legislator to write an OpEd regarding Venezuela's humanitarian assistance to the United States through the low-cost heating oil program, which has benefited the low-income communities of Rhode Island for the past two years. This OpEd could be published at the Rhode Island General Assembly

You should also participate in your local townhall meetings and encourage your community to be conscious global-neighbors. Passing local city-council resolutions in favor of Venezuela's participatory democracy is a great way to impulse this dialogue. Contact the VIO for more information at 202 347 8081, ext. 603

Pass this information on. Write a list of all your friends, relatives and colleagues who would be interested in learning more about Venezuela and encourage them to check out www.veninfo.org and have them sign up to our list-serves.

Don't forget to tell all your friends during the famous Newport International Film Festival this upcoming June about your involvement in Venezuela!

In Solidarity,

THE VIO Team

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From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Viernes, 04 de Mayo de 2007 02:36 p.m.

Subject: CALIFORNIA - Hear Venezuelan Ambassador

Dear friends in California,

Forward to networks in California!

Next week Venezuela's ambassador to the U.S., Bernardo Alvarez, will be travelling throughout your great state to encourage dialogue about Venezuela's social policies and to promote respectful relations between the US and Venezuela. Most of his travels will take him to San Francisco and Los Angeles and the following events are open to the public. For more information on any of these events please contact 301-613-4767.

SAN FRANCISCO

Tuesday May 8

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Breakfast with Ambassador Alvarez and community activists, grassroots leaders and base Organizations at the Women's Building
3543 18th St. #8 San Francisco, CA 94110.

4:00 pm -6:00 pm

Speech by Ambassador Alvarez at Berkeley.
Sponsored by the Center for Latin American Studies.
Theme: "Venezuela-US Relations & the Bolivarian Revolution"
554 BARROWS Hall/ Ethnic Studies Conference Room, UC Berkeley.

Wednesday May 9

12:00 m. -2:00 pm

Talk at the World Affairs Council
World Affairs Council Auditorium, 312 Sutter Street, 2nd Floor, San Francisco.

4:00 p.m. -5:30 p.m.

Speech by Ambassador Alvarez at Stanford University.
Sponsored by the Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law and the Center for Latin American Studies.
Theme: Venezuela: Revolutionizing Energy Integration and Democracy.
Building 320, Room 105, Stanford University.

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, May 12

11:30am-1pm

Conference on Globalización and the Impact of the Labor Movement

Riverside University, Department of Ethnic Studies.

Panel will include: Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez; Blanca Flor Bonilla, Deputy in the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador; Leonel Búcaro, Centroamerican Parliament. Moderator: William Robinson.

West Campus Drive. Life Sciences 1500. (Center of the University)

Monday, May 14

12noon-2pm

Talk by Ambassador Alvarez at UCLA's panel discussion on: "Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution" Misperception by U.S. Media and Policy Makers. Panelists include: Ambassador, President of the Willi Velásquez Institute, Antonio González and Dolores Huerta. 405 Hilgard Avenue. Los Angeles

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2011 SEP 20 PM 4:33
OFFICE OF INFORMATION UNIT

-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Jueves, 03 de Mayo de 2007 02:26 p.m.

Subject: Colorado please take action! forward to networks!

Dear friends in Colorado,

The Denver Post has done it again and we need your help to set the record straight!

Today, the Post published another erroneous and speculative editorial entitled: "Oil Uncertainty in Venezuela" depicting Venezuela's recent partial nationalizations more as expropriations rather than revenue sharing agreements. You can read it at:

http://www.denverpost.com/opinion/ci_5802654

Once you've reviewed the editorial and if you are so inclined please **send a letter to the editor** at openforum@denverpost.com and share your opinion of it with them. Remember letters should be short and to the point and no more than 150 words. Be sure to include your name, address, phone and email at the end of your letter.

You can also post your comments on their website at:

<http://thedenverposteditorialboard.comments.denverpost.com/default.asp?item=589294>

You may find the following facts helpful:

- President Chavez is pursuing a program of natural resource nationalization in key industries, in an effort to redirect the benefit of Venezuela's natural wealth toward its own people. So far, all nationalizations have resulted in private companies being paid what has widely been seen as fair compensation.
- As Time Magazine points out, Chavez is just catching up with the rest of the world. From Mexico to China, more than 75% of the world's oil reserves are controlled by national oil companies today. Of the world's top 20 oil-producing firms, 14 are state-run. And even though companies will no longer hold majority stakes as they had in the past since the agreements assign 60% revenue shares to Venezuela from this point on private companies will still be able to own 40%. <http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/news/05-01-07tm.html>
- Improved *efficiency and access to services* are among the chief goals of the nationalization plan. Domestic markets for electricity, telecommunications, and oil will be well served by the changes, which involve a mixture of public and private ownership that allots the government a dominant voice in these strategic industries. This way, Venezuelan citizens may enjoy the full benefits of national sovereignty over resources.
- At the high point of oil and gas prices, a dozen U.S. senators of both parties appealed to oil companies' "sense of corporate citizenship" to help less fortunate Americans get through the winter in the face of cuts in federal assistance. Citgo, a century-old American oil refining owned

by Venezuela's state oil company, did its part by providing 40% low-cost heating oil to low-income Americans. No other oil company has done so.

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From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Martes, 22 de Mayo de 2007 12:34 p.m.

Subject: Halt H. CON. RES. 77 - VENEZUELA

Importance: High

Halt H. CON. RES. 77, non-renewal of RCTV License does not alter Venezuela's commitment to Freedom of Expression

Dear Member of the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs,

On March 1, 2007, Rep. Jerry Weller (R-IL) introduced H. CON. RES. 77 condemning a decision made by the Venezuelan National Telecommunications Commission not to renew the broadcasting license of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), a privately owned television station.

Rep. Weller incorrectly describes the decision as being “political” and a threat to freedom of expression in Venezuela, when in fact this is a regulatory matter based on existing telecommunications law and the provisions of the 1999 Constitution. Furthermore, the constitutional right to make decisions on the licensing of broadcasters is enjoyed by most governments worldwide, including that of the U.S.

The non-renewal of the RCTV license does not alter the Venezuelan government’s commitment to freedom of expression, freedom of information and freedom of the press. Cable and satellite broadcasts will continue to be available for the station’s use.

The Vice-Chair of the European Parliament’s Freedom Commission, Giusto Catania, ruled out that the EU Parliament would pass a resolution against Venezuela for the non-renewal of the RCTV license. Also, José Miguel Insulza, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, stated last week that it is up to the Venezuelan courts to solve the dispute over RCTV.

Please read the attached factsheet on “Press Freedoms in Venezuela: The Case of RCTV”. For more information, please contact the Venezuela Information Office at 202 347 8081, ext. 603 or at natali@veninfo.org

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Martes, 22 de Mayo de 2007 01:05 p.m.

Subject: Halt S. RES. 211 - VENEZUELA

Halt S. RES. 211, non-renewal of RCTV License does not alter Venezuela's commitment to Freedom of Expression

Dear Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations,

On May 21, 2007 Senators Lugar (R-IN) and Dodd (D-CT) introduced S. Res. 211 condemning a decision made by the Venezuelan National Telecommunications Commission not to renew the broadcasting license of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), a privately owned television station.

Senators Lugar and Dodd incorrectly describes the decision as being “political” and a threat to freedom of expression in Venezuela, when in fact this is a regulatory matter based on existing telecommunications law and the provisions of the 1999 Constitution. Furthermore, the constitutional right to make decisions on the licensing of broadcasters is enjoyed by most governments worldwide, including that of the U.S.

The non-renewal of the RCTV license does not alter the Venezuelan government’s commitment to freedom of expression, freedom of information and freedom of the press. Cable and satellite broadcasts will continue to be available for the station’s use.

The Vice-Chair of the European Parliament’s Freedom Commission, Giusto Catania, ruled out that the EU Parliament would pass a resolution against Venezuela for the non-renewal of the RCTV license. Also, José Miguel Insulza, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, stated last week that it is up to the Venezuelan courts to solve the dispute over RCTV.

Please read the attached factsheet on “Press Freedoms in Venezuela: The Case of RCTV”. For more information, please contact the Venezuela Information Office at 202 347 8081, ext. 603 or at natali@veninfo.org

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Viernes, 25 de Mayo de 2007 12:30 p.m.

Subject: Senate Passes Anti-Venezuela Resolution

ANTI-VENEZUELAN RESOLUTION PASSED IN SENATE COMMITTEE

Yesterday, May 24, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations passed an anti-Venezuelan resolution that will be voted on the Senate floor in early June.

CALL YOUR SENATORS TO VOTE NO TO S. RES. 211 TODAY!

WHAT IS S. Res. 211?

Senators Lugar (R-IN) and Dodd (D-CT) introduced S. Res. 211 to condemn a decision made by the Venezuelan National

Telecommunications Commission not to renew the broadcasting license of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), a privately owned television station, that is up at the end of this month. This resolution incorrectly describes the decision as being "political" and a threat to freedom of expression in Venezuela, when in fact it is a regulatory matter based on existing telecommunications law and the provisions of the 1999 Constitution.

Furthermore, the constitutional right to make decisions on the licensing of broadcasters is enjoyed by most governments worldwide, including that of the U.S.

WE NEED YOU TO:

- **Call the Senate switchboard at 202-225-3121**
- **Ask the operator to transfer you to one of your senators (every state has 2 senators).**
- **Once you are transferred to your senator's office, ask to speak to the Legislative Aid who works on Venezuela.**
- **Request a face-to-face meeting with them while they are home between May 28 - June 1 and tell them not to vote for S. Res. 211.**

TALKING POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- S. Res. 211 is a misleading resolution that incorrectly describes the non-renewal decision as being "political" and a threat to freedom of expression in Venezuela, when in fact this is a regulatory matter based on existing telecommunications law and the provisions of the 1999 Constitution.
- RCTV is Venezuela's most often cited station for legal infractions, including the airing of pornography and cigarette advertisements. Previous offenses committed under other presidential administrations led to repeated closures and fines for RCTV, but the most recent violation is in regard to the role of the station in supporting the 2002 coup by airing programming encouraging the public to take to the streets to depose the democratically elected President, as well as the economic oil sabotage in 2002 - 2003.

- The non-renewal of the RCTV broadcasting license does not alter the Venezuelan government's commitment to freedom of expression. Cable and satellite broadcasts will continue to be available for the station's use.
- The constitutional right to make decisions on the licensing of broadcasters is enjoyed by most governments worldwide, including that of the U.S. Moreover, the Venezuelan Supreme Court ruled in early May to uphold the non-renewal decision.
- Although the Senate resolution calls on the Organization of American States (OAS) to condemn Venezuela, José Miguel Insulza, Secretary-General of the OAS, has stated it is up to the Venezuelan courts to resolve the dispute over RCTV.

Please forward this message to ALL YOUR FRIENDS and ask them to make a similar call. Post this message on all your list serves!

For more information on how to proceed, call the VIO at 202 347 8081, ext. 603. Please let us know if you decide to call.

You should also be aware that the Commissioner for Puerto Rico, Luis Fortuño (R-PR), and Rep. Weller(R-IL) have also submitted anti-Venezuelan resolutions in the House Foreign Relations Committee.

Check out the VIO's fact sheet on "[Press Freedoms in Venezuela: The Case of RCTV](#)".

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Viernes, 25 de Mayo de 2007 12:30 p.m.

Subject: UPDATE: ANTI-VENEZUELAN RESOLUTION PASSED BY FULL SENATE!

UPDATE: ANTI-VENEZUELAN RESOLUTION PASSED BY FULL SENATE!

Yesterday, May 24, an anti-Venezuelan Resolution on freedom of expression was agreed to in the Senate without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent.

Earlier today we asked you to call your senators, not to vote for this resolution, however it appears that it was actually voted on and passed yesterday. We apologize for the inaccurate information. However, as we approach Monday, the day that RCTV's non-renewal of its broadcasting license will go into effect we anticipate other resolutions to gain more steam.

The current resolutions still in House committees are:

H. CON. RES. 77 sponsored by Representative Weller (R-IL) "calling on the Government of Venezuela to respect a free and independent media and to avoid all acts of censorship against the media and free expression." This resolution currently has 9 co-sponsors and is in the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Read the [full text](#)

H. CON. RES. 50 sponsored by the Representative for Puerto Rico, Luis Fortuño (R-PR) "calling on the Government of Venezuela to uphold the human rights and civil liberties of the people of Venezuela" currently has 40 co-sponsors and was referred to the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight in the House. Read the [full text](#)

TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THESE ISSUES:

- Check out the VIO's fact sheet on "Press Freedoms in Venezuela: The Case of RCTV" at: <http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/RCTV.htm>
- Check out the VIO's fact sheet on "Human Rights" at: <http://www.rethinkvenezuela.com/downloads/Human%20Rights2006.htm>

Look for more information on Monday.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Martes, 29 de Mayo de 2007 12:52 p.m.

Subject: Media Gets RCTV Wrong-Voice Your Concern

MEDIA MISREPRESENTS KEY FACTS IN THE RCTV CASE LETTERS NEEDED TODAY

Yesterday and today a slew of biased editorials, op-eds, and articles appeared in the U.S. press about the Venezuelan government's decision not to renew the broadcasting license of RCTV. Those most egregious and devoid of any real factual content were the *Los Angeles Times*' "Venezuelan TV Station Goes Dark" by Chris Kraul (May 28), an editorial by the *Financial Times* (May 29) and "Chavez Changes Channels", the *Economist's* Top Story today.

Almost all frame the RCTV issue as one of deteriorating press freedoms, rather than a government's legitimate response to a station that helped plot and carry out a coup. By stating that the Venezuelan government has "alleged" and "accused" RCTV of involvement in the coup, rather than presenting it as fact, accepted by many independent observers, news sources mislead the reader.

YOUR BRIEF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ARE NEEDED! Send a letter to one or all! Some important facts are outlined below. Feel free to use them in your letters and remember to include your name, address, phone, email and title if applicable.

To submit a letter to the *LA Times* send it to: letters@latimes.com

To submit a letter to the *Economist* send it to: letters@economist.com

To submit a letter to the *Financial Times* send it to: letters.editor@ft.com

KEY POINTS:

Neither the *Economist*, *Financial Times*, nor the *LA Times* brings a logical view to the case. What media in the world would criticize the U.S. government or any other democracy for not renewing a broadcasting license for a station that had promoted a coup? This is clearly an example of irresponsible broadcasting, as it violates legal norms.

The media does not mention the fact that, even after the non-renewal, the vast majority of Venezuela's media remains in private hands. In fact, the other major TV stations critical of Chavez, whose licenses were up for renewal, did receive them.

What's worse, the public broadcasting station which has taken RCTV's place- Venezuela's first ever- is condemned. The government gave an initial \$4 million to the station to begin but its autonomous board of directors will try to diversify funding by looking for corporate advertising in October. Why should the U.S. press decry the creation of a Venezuelan PBS? A station that benefits the public good and promotes educational, cultural, and national themes in a neutral fashion is truly needed in Venezuela.

Finally, it is interesting that other nations who have recently decided not to renew broadcasting licenses for stations that violated radio and TV laws, such as Peru in April of this year, and Uruguay last December, received little if any press coverage or condemnation.

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2011 OCT 20 PM 4:25
COM/REGISTRATION UNIT

-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Miércoles, 30 de Mayo de 2007 02:28 p.m.

To: natali@veninfo.org

Subject: URGENT: Pelosi on Venezuela

Dear Friends,

Please receive our apologies for the high-volume of action alerts that we have been sending lately. Too much is happening and we need your immediate action.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) released a statement today that criticized a recent decision by the Venezuelan government not to renew the broadcasting license of RCTV.

We strongly encourage you to email and call Speaker Pelosi to set the record straight.
Please contact the following people:

Pelosi's Chief of Staff/Policy Adviser: Terri.Mccullough@mail.house.gov

Pelosi's Media Staff: Brenda.Daly@mail.house.gov

Call Speaker Pelosi at 202-226-7616

When you call or email, feel free to use the following TALKING POINTS:

1. There is no "Suppression of Media in Venezuela," nor was there a "closure" of RCTV. Instead its license to broadcast on the public airwaves was not renewed.
2. The non-renewal of the license prevents RCTV from broadcasting on open access channels, but the station will still be allowed to broadcast in Venezuela through the internet as well as cable and satellite TV. Neither does it affect the possibility of RCTV producing material for domestic or international TV programming. Moreover, RCTV may continue to broadcast using their two radio stations.
3. The non-renewal is due to RCTV's failure to abide by legal norms established by the Venezuelan Constitution and the Law of Social Responsibility for Radio and Television. The law forbids public airwaves licensees from inciting political violence and civil unrest. RCTV's violations involve conspiracy to bring down the elected government of Venezuela during the violent coup of April 2002 as well as the active promotion of an economic sabotage later that year, which cost the country more than US\$10 billion in losses. RCTV also has a long list of sanctions imposed by previous governments for reasons ranging from pornography, violations of laws prohibiting publicity of smoking and alcohol drinking to transmissions of false information.
4. The non-renewal of RCTV's broadcasting license is not an example of censorship, nor is it a strike against the private media in Venezuela. RCTV was part of a majority; 79 out of 81 TV stations and all 118 newspapers in the country are privately owned. Most are vehemently opposed to the democratically elected government of President Chavez. RCTV is unique only in its editorial excesses and its history of violating legal norms.

5. RCTV's large share of the open-access airwaves was assigned, upon expiration, to a public broadcaster that is dedicated to presenting programming that features independent operators and producers.

PLEASE FORWARD TO YOUR NETWORKS.

Do your best to personalize your email, and make sure to send it to your Congressional Representatives, as well. To find out who your Representatives are, please go to:
<http://www.house.gov/writerep/>

Please read VIO's fact sheet on "[Press Freedoms in Venezuela: The Case of RCTV.](#)" For more information, please call the Venezuela Information Office at 202 347 8081, ext. 603 or email natali@veninfo.org

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: 04 de Junio de 2007 02:00 p.m.

To: natali@veninfo.org

Subject: Friends in AZ, Venezuela needs your help!

Dear Friends,

An editorial by Doug MacEachern in yesterday's *Arizona Republic* misrepresented the non-renewal of the broadcasting license of RCTV, Venezuela's largest privately owned opposition broadcaster. The government is not "appropriating" or "shutting down" RCTV, but rather, has chosen not to renew that station's license to broadcast on the public airwaves. This, however, does not prevent the station from broadcasting on cable or satellite TV. The move is in response to illegal acts committed by the station and does not infringe on the right to freedom of expression in Venezuela.

Read the op-ed [here](#).

Make your opinion known by writing a letter to the editor.

Feel free to use the following points in your letter:

- RCTV may be Venezuela's oldest TV station, but it is also the most famous for legal violations. RCTV's active support for the coup attempt against President Chavez in 2002 is simply the latest in a series of unconstitutional acts. The station is also in arrears on federal taxes, has violated workers' rights, and aired pornography and cigarette ads, for which it has been fined and closed under previous administrations.
- RCTV has been presented as a crusader for freedom of expression, but instead represents the dominance of Venezuela's private, opposition-affiliated media. RCTV's owner alone, Marcel Granier, controls 40% of the open-access airwaves in Venezuela. The public broadcasting station, TVes will replace RCTV on the air, in an important step toward the inclusion of more diverse programming as part of the democratization of the airwaves. This is the first time that Venezuela has ever had a public broadcasting station.
- The comparison between the RCTV non-renewal, which is based on the station's unconstitutional acts, and supposed threats to private property in Venezuela is poorly done. Neither banks nor steel companies are slated for nationalization.
- More balanced reporting on RCTV and other Venezuelan issues is needed. The editorial contradicts itself by playing lip service to press freedoms, then suggesting that journalists who consider diverse viewpoints are "leftist lapdogs" who should have their reporters' "licenses" revoked.

Remember that letters to the *Arizona Republic* cannot exceed 200 words, and must include your name, address and daytime phone number.

Submit your letter using the online form found [here](#), or fax it to (602) 444-8933.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: 08 de Julio de 2007 03:00 p.m.

Subject: Venezuela in Texas this week!

Dear friends in Texas,

This week, beginning Monday, July 9, Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez will be visiting your home state! He will visit San Antonio on July 9th to meet with local public officials and community leaders and then go to Houston on the 10th, 11th and 12th. He will be in the two cities as part of a larger Texas tour aimed at creating new relationships in social and cultural arenas.

We hope you will attend the events below and take advantage of this unique opportunity to meet Venezuela's representative in the United States. *In addition, the renowned Afro-Venezuelan ensemble, Eleggua, will be joining him for a special performance!* Please spread the word and post on your list serves!

San Antonio

- Monday, July 9th at 7 PM: Remarks by Ambassador Álvarez following a free performance by Afro-Venezuelan women's musical ensemble Eleggua. Location: Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, 1300 Guadalupe Street.

Houston

- Tuesday, July 10th at 7 PM: A Discussion with Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez, hosted by city councilwoman Ada Edwards and followed by a concert of the Afro-Venezuelan women's musical ensemble Eleggua. Location: Shrine of the Black Madonna Church, 5317 Martin Luther King Blvd. in Houston.

For more information call Olivia Gombri: 301-613-4767.

Bernardo Álvarez became Ambassador of Venezuela to the United States in January of 2003. His previous positions include Vice Minister of Hydrocarbons at the Ministry of Energy and Mines, Deputy to the National Congress, Vice Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee and Chairman of the Energy and Mines Committee. In the international area, he has held positions as Representative of Venezuela and Member of the Executive Committee to the U.S. Energy Council, Principal Coordinator for Venezuela in the Cooperation Agreement on Energy with the United States, and Head of the Venezuelan Delegation to the Ministerial Conferences of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Ambassador Álvarez has taught at the School of Political and Administrative studies of the Universidad Central de Venezuela and at the Superior School of the Venezuelan Air Force, and served as Academic Advisor at the Institute of Higher Studies on National Defense. Ambassador Álvarez holds a degree in Political Science from the Universidad Central de Venezuela and a Masters degree in Development Studies from the University of Sussex, England.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Miércoles, 25 de Julio de 2007 02:06 p.m.

Subject: Why did the IMF support the 2002 Coup Government?

Dear Friends of Venezuela,

Recently, a number of Members of Congress have made enquiries into the active support of the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** in the undemocratic and unconstitutional coup d'etat against Venezuela in April 2002. The coup government of Pedro Carmona dissolved the Constitution, the National Assembly, and the Supreme Court before the democratically elected government of President Hugo Chavez was returned to power by a popular uprising.

DEMAND THE TRUTH

Toward this effort, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, Rep. Raúl Grijalva and Rep. José Serrano are currently asking their colleagues in Congress to join them in their quest to seek answers for the IMF's immediate offer of assistance to the coup government of Pedro Carmona, and what, if anything, the institution knew about the coup in advance.

At an IMF press briefing on April 12, 2002, the IMF External Relations Director, Mr. Dawson, was asked if the IMF had any concerns about the events taking place in Venezuela and about the "status of the IMF-Venezuela relationship?" Mr. Dawson acknowledged that he was aware of the events that had taken place [a coup] and reading from a prepared statement went on to say that "we stand ready to assist the new administration in whatever manner they find suitable." (From the transcript, available on the IMF's website). A significant number of Members of Congress should demand that the IMF explain these statements.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Call your Congressman and ask him/her to sign onto the Dear Colleague letter "Why Would the IMF Offer Immediate Assistance to an Undemocratic Coup Government?" sponsored initially by Kucinich and Grijalva. If they have any questions, refer them to the office of Rep. Kucinich.

Then, ask your Representative to contact the IMF and ask the following: 1) Why did the IMF support a coup government and 2) Request a copy of all documents and records pertaining to this IMF policy decision towards Venezuela.

To find out who represents you in Congress, please go to <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> For further information, please contact the Venezuela Information Office at 202-347-8081, ext. 603.

Let us know if you and your friends have called your members of Congress!

Venezuela Information Office

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: 30 de Julio de 2007 02:06 p.m.

Subject: We need Meeks on IMF letter

Dear friends of Venezuela in New York -

We need you to please contact Congressman Gregory Meeks (D-NY) to ask him to sign onto the Dear Colleague letter headed by Congressmen Dennis Kucinich and Raul Grijalva.

Rep. Meeks' phone number in his Washington office is 202-225-3461 -This won't take more than 2 minutes.

The message is simple: Congressman Meeks, please sign onto the Dear Colleague letter headed by Kucinich and Grijalva to demand the IMF to explain the American people the reasons why the IMF supported a coup government and also request a copy of all documents and records pertaining to this IMF policy decision towards Venezuela. (more information below).

Let me know if you can make this brief call -

Natali

natali@veninfo.org

202 347 8081, ext. 603

=====

Dear Friends of Venezuela,

Recently, a number of Members of Congress have made enquiries into the active support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the undemocratic and unconstitutional coup d'etat against Venezuela in April 2002. The coup government of Pedro Carmona dissolved the Constitution, the National Assembly, and the Supreme Court before the democratically elected government of President Hugo Chavez was returned to power by a popular uprising.

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Venezuela Information Office
www.veninfo.org

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: 30 de Julio de 2007 03:06 p.m.

Subject: California, get on the phone for Venezuela!

Dear friends of Venezuela in California -

We need you to contact Reps. Honda, Waters, and Linda Sanchez to ask them to please sign onto the Dear Colleague letter headed by Congressmen Dennis Kucinich and Raul Grijalva.

Representative Mike Honda: 202-225-2631

Representative Maxine Waters: 202-225-2201

Representative Linda Sanchez: 202-225-6676

This won't take more than 5 minutes.

The message is simple: Congressmember, please sign onto the Dear Colleague letter headed by Kucinich and Grijalva to demand the IMF to explain the American people the reasons why the IMF supported a coup government and also request a copy of all documents and records pertaining to this IMF policy decision towards Venezuela. (more information below).

Let me know if you can make this brief calls -

Natali

Natali@veninfo.org

202- 347 -8081, ext. 603

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Let us know if you and your friends have called your members of Congress!

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: 30 de Julio de 2007 03:06 p.m.

Subject: Maryland, get on the phone for Venezuela!

Dear friends of Venezuela in my **beloved Maryland** -

We need you to please contact Reps. Van Hollen, Wynn, Sarbanes, Ruppersberger, and Cummings to ask them to please sign onto the Dear Colleague letter (attached) headed by Congressmen Dennis Kucinich and Raul Grijalva.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Representative Ruppersberger (D - 02) | 202-225-3061 |
| Representative Sarbanes (D - 03) | 202-225-4016 |
| Representative Wynn (D - 04) | 202-225-8699 |
| Representative Cummings (D - 07) | 202-225-4741 |
| Representative Van Hollen (D - 08) | 202-225-5341 |

This won't take more than 5 minutes.

The message is simple: Congressman, please sign onto the Dear Colleague letter headed by Kucinich and Grijalva to demand the IMF to explain the American people the reasons why the IMF supported a coup government and also request a copy of all documents and records pertaining to this IMF policy decision towards Venezuela. (more information below).

Please let me know if you can make this brief calls - **This is very important.**

Natali

Natali del Carmen Fani
Associate Director
Venezuela Information Office - VIO
2000 P Street NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20036
Office: 202 347 8081, ext. 603
Mobile: 301 442 8459
Fax: 202 223 8029
www.veninfo.org

=====

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government of President Hugo Chavez was returned to power by a popular uprising.

DEMAND THE TRUTH

Toward this effort, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, Rep. Raúl Grijalva and Rep. José Serrano are currently asking their colleagues in Congress to join them in their quest to seek answers for the IMF's immediate offer of assistance to the coup government of Pedro Carmona, and what, if anything, the institution knew about the coup in advance.

At an IMF press briefing on April 12, 2002, the IMF External Relations Director, Mr. Dawson, was asked if the IMF had any concerns about the events taking place in Venezuela and about the "status of the IMF-Venezuela relationship?" Mr. Dawson acknowledged that he was aware of the events that had taken place [a coup] and reading from a prepared statement went on to say that "we stand ready to assist the new administration in whatever manner they find suitable." (From the transcript, available on the [IMF's website](#)). A significant number of Members of Congress should demand that the IMF explain these statements.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Call your Congressman and ask him/her to sign onto the Dear Colleague letter "Why Would the IMF Offer Immediate Assistance to an Undemocratic Coup Government?" sponsored initially by Kucinich and Grijalva. If they have any questions, refer them to the office of Rep. Kucinich.

Then, ask your Representative to contact the IMF and ask the following: 1) Why did the IMF support a coup government and 2) Request a copy of all documents and records pertaining to this IMF policy decision towards Venezuela.

To find out who represents you in Congress, please go to <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> For further information, please contact the Venezuela Information Office at 202-347-8081, ext. 603.

Let us know if you and your friends have called your members of Congress!

Venezuela Information Office
www.veninfo.org

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: Viernes, 27 de Julio de 2007 12:33 p.m.

Subject: Michigan, we need you!

Dear friends of Venezuela in Michigan-

We need you to please contact Rep. John Conyers and Rep. Caroline Kilpatrick to ask them to please sign onto the Dear Colleague letter (attached) headed by Congressmen Dennis Kucinich and Raul Grijalva.

Conyer's phone number is (202) 225-5126 and Kilpatrick's is 202-225-2261. This won't take more than 5 minutes.

The message is simple: Congressmember Conyers/Kilpatrick, please sign onto the Dear Colleague letter headed by Kucinich and Grijalva to demand the IMF to explain the American people the reasons why the IMF supported a coup government and also request a copy of all documents and records pertaining to this IMF policy decision towards Venezuela.

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU CAN MAKE THESE BRIEF PHONE CALLS -

Natali

Natali del Carmen Fani
Associate Director
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Washington, DC 20036
Office: 202 347 8081, ext. 603
Mobile: 301 442 8459
Fax: 202 223 8029
www.veninfo.org

From: Venezuela Information Office

Dear Friends of Venezuela,

Recently, a number of Members of Congress have made enquiries into the active support of the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** in the undemocratic and unconstitutional coup d'etat against Venezuela in April 2002. The coup government of Pedro Carmona dissolved the Constitution, the National Assembly, and the Supreme Court before the democratically elected government of President Hugo Chavez was returned to power by a popular uprising.

DEMAND THE TRUTH

Toward this effort, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, Rep. Raúl Grijalva and Rep. José Serrano are currently asking their colleagues in Congress to join them in their quest to seek answers for the IMF's immediate offer of assistance to the

coup government of Pedro Carmona, and what, if anything, the institution knew about the coup in advance.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Venezuela Information Office [mailto:newsandaction@veninfo.org]

Sent: 14 de September de 2007 12:00 p.m.

Subject: VIO News & Action- Update on Constitutional Reforms



In less than three months, Venezuelan voters will decide the fate of their democracy in a national referendum where they will vote to accept or decline a constitutional reform proposal submitted last month by President Chavez. The stakes are high as many feel a "yes" vote would enable President Chavez to continue moving forward in constructing 21st century socialism in Venezuela.

THE REFORM FORECAST: WHO'S IN FRONT

Reliable polls, including the most recent by the opposition associated polling firm Hinterlaces, indicates that a majority of Venezuelans will vote to accept the reformed constitution because they support the president. Thirty-one percent of voters surveyed said they would approve it, while 27 percent would reject it. Many said they would abstain or were undecided. Hinterlaces spoke with 900 registered voters for the poll. You can read the full Reuters news story [here](#).

THE PROCESS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Constitutional reforms may be proposed by either the President of the Republic, the National Assembly, or 15% of registered voters organized through petitioning. Since the president submitted his reforms to the National Assembly on August 15, 2007 a slew of official and informal debates have ensued. According to the constitution, the reform proposals must be debated three times in the National Assembly, modified if needed, and then each reform must be approved by two-thirds in order to move on to the final stage: a national referendum slated for early December. Already two of the three debates have concluded, the last is expected sometime in October.



In the meantime legislators alongside civil society organizations and opposition political parties are voicing their suggestions and concerns in the hopes that their ideas will be included in the final proposal. The political parties Democratic Action (AD), Movement towards Socialism (MAS) and Justice First, voiced their concerns while speaking in front of the National Assembly earlier this week, including a suggestion to allow the electorate to vote on each suggested reform individually rather than all at once. Cilia Flores, President of the National Assembly (pictured here) stated that they would take

their suggestions into consideration as well as proposals from other sectors of society such as lowering the voting age from 18 years to 16 years and removing any discrimination against homosexuality in the constitution. Read more about this process in the recent venezuelanalysis.com [article](#).

WHAT DO THE REFORMS ENTAIL?

The 2007 reforms affect 33 of the 350 articles comprising the 1999 Constitution, or slightly less than ten percent of the legislation. The major areas slated for change are: economic, political, social, and military. They do not however, significantly impact the political structure of the country, as did the 1999 Constitution. Their most important aim, according to President Chavez, is to create a "new geometry of power" that increases citizen power and government accountability.

As the summer ends and the countdown to this historic vote begins, one-sided and inaccurate articles will likely increase, with primary focus given to the most controversial reform which would add one year to the current six-year presidential term and allow for continual reelection (Article 230). Currently, the executive office is subject to a two-term limit. Despite claims that the change is a bid by President Chavez to remain in office, the removal of term limits would not affect the basic system of electoral competition in Venezuela. It would not restrict the right of citizens to run candidates against Chavez or his party. Most importantly, the ability of the populace to organize a national recall referendum to oust the sitting president mid-term would not be altered. This provision is part of the 1999 Constitution and has already been invoked once, in 2004.

To become better acquainted with the intricacies of all the major areas up for reform you can continue [reading the VIO fact sheet](#) on the subject. As time continues it will be more and more important to respond to these biased articles with facts.

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